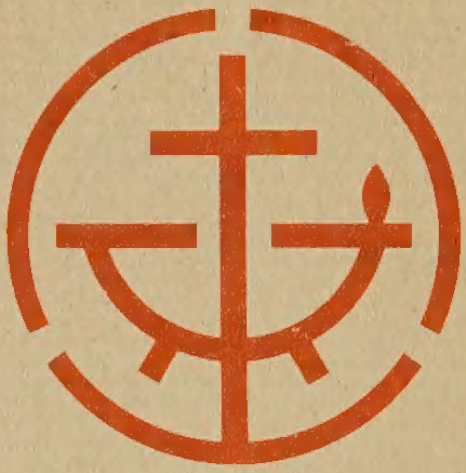
INFANT
BAPTISM

DR. WOODS



LECTURES

ON

INFANT BAPTISM.

BY

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WITH

PREFACE AND NOTES.

BY

JAMES MORISON,
KILMARNOCK.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

I BEG to introduce to the candid perusal of the English reader an important American work, on a subject that has been found to be equally harassing in Great Britain and America. That subject is the interesting question whether or not the infant children of believers are to be excluded from Christian baptism. It has been the prevailing practice in our country to baptize infants; but as the legitimacy of the practice has been called in question, many young disciples of Jesus are perplexed with the idea that perhaps it is requisite to be rebaptized; and many conscientious parents are haunted with fears that they are perhaps guilty of will-worship in presenting their children as subjects of so delightful an ordinance.

It is to aid, and enlighten, and relieve these conscientious followers of the Saviour, that I have been at pains to have the following work issued from a British press.

It is a work of no ordinary merit, written by a divine of no ordinary accomplishments. It is not, indeed, to be looked upon as a faultless production, and therefore the editor is not to be regarded as subscribing to every tittle of its details. Neither is it to be considered as a work that has fully exhausted the subject, and therefore it is not to be regarded as superseding other excellent productions on the same question, or as laying an interdict upon future and farther investigation. It is, however, an evidently superior work, characterised by sound thought, patient argumentation, critical exposition, felicitous illustration — and, what is still more—by a sweet benevolence and candour of spirit. Had there been a breadth of comprehension, and an accuracy in minutiæ, equal to these qualities, the work would certainly have approximated, more nearly than most books on baptism, to every one's idea of perfection. With all its human imperfections, however, it cannot fail to

have such an effect upon the candid, conscientious, and intelligent inquirer, who gives it a patient perusal, that he will not leap hastily into heartless anti-pædobaptism.

In the American edition there is a short appendix on the mode of baptism; but as the author does not seem to have studied so carefully and mastered so fully that less important part of the question, the editor has omitted the concluding lecture from this British edition. In place of it, he is happy to be able to refer to a British work which is so complete, that, to the general reader, it entirely supersedes the necessity of going abroad to foreign countries for information. This work is, THORN'S "Modern Immersion not Scripture Baptism," (London, Jackson & Walford,) a work literally loaded with matter, and, in the main, unanswerable. The more learned inquirer may consult with profit many elaborate works on the same subject, but especially the papers of President Beecher, contained in the "American Biblical Repository." The first paper is in No. 5 of the Second Series of that periodical, and the remainder will be found with occasional intermissions, in

the immediately succeeding numbers. While these papers form a lasting monument of the learned author's eminent qualifications to throw light upon the most perplexed theological topics, and while they are consequently admirably calculated to slake a learned thirst for a learned discussion on the mode of baptism, the opinion of not a few meets the judgment of the present writer, that the labours of President Beecher would have been of more practical avail, had he grasped more powerfully the evidently overwhelming New Testament evidence that goes to substantiate the position, that the apostles and their fellow-labourers *never immersed,* when they baptized. Let any candid and unprejudiced mind read the following two verses in connexion, and he will be satisfied as to the *mode* of baptism—Acts xi. 15, 16, "And as I began to speak, *the Holy Ghost* FELL ON *them,* as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but *ye shall be* BAPTIZED *with the Holy Ghost.*"

It is the editor's ardent prayer, that candid inquirers may patiently consider this whole sub-

ject of baptism; and it is his earnest hope, and indeed his strongly-fixed expectation, that this work of Dr. L. Woods will help all such as read it, to see that part of the question on which he writes, in the light of unerring Scripture. I shall rejoice in the time and labour I have expended, if the minds of any wavering and harassed disciples of Jesus shall, through means of this book, be settled in a firm and scripturally fixed persuasion that the infant children of believers ought not to be deprived of baptism.

I may mention that this reprint is a verbatim copy of the American edition of 1828. All the notes at the end, and those throughout the work marked with the initials [J. M.] are mine.

JAMES MORISON.

Kilmarnock,
January 1, 1845.

PREFACE.

The following lectures on infant baptism make a part of a regular course of lectures, which the laws of this institution require in the department of Christian theology. The publication of them was requested, about two years ago, by those theological students to whom they were first delivered; and the same request has been made by many ministers and students since. The reader will perceive, that the doctrine of infant baptism is a doctrine which I very seriously believe, and which I feel it to be my duty earnestly to maintain. He will perceive, too, that the doctrine is dear to my heart, and is associated in my contemplations with the most sacred truths of religion, and the most precious interests of Christ's kingdom.

My manner of treating this subject is not the result of haste, but of repeated and long-continued investigation. It has been my object, as far as possible, to give simplicity and clearness to the discussion, and to avoid all approaches to the heat and asperity, with which the controversy respecting baptism has often been conducted. I am persuaded that those whose

opinions I here oppose, and who constitute a very large and respectable denomination of Christians, will never suspect me of being deficient in affection for them, or in readiness to do what I can to promote their welfare. For many years in the earlier part of my life, I had a decided prepossession in favour of their peculiar sentiments on the subject of baptism; and they have a right to inquire for the reasons of my present belief. I here frankly give them my reasons. In the following lectures they will find the principal considerations, which satisfy my own mind in favour of infant baptism. And they will see, that I have not contented myself with barely stating arguments, but have endeavoured, in different ways, to illustrate the propriety and conclusiveness of the mode of reasoning which I have adopted, and to show that it rests on principles generally admitted in other cases, and that it is liable to no just exceptions. If I have in different parts of these lectures, touched repeatedly upon the same general arguments, and the same modes of illustration, I hope the nature of the subject will suggest to the mind of the reader a satisfactory apology.

If any of those who dissent from me, shall think proper to animadvert upon what I have written, I wish them to do it in the spirit of Christ, and without any expectation that I shall make a reply. Neither the duties of my office, nor my views of what the welfare of Christ's kingdom requires, would permit me to pursue this subject in a protracted controversy.

I have only to add, that in the discussion of this subject, it has been my serious endeavour to do what the God of love would approve. I have charged myself to remember, that the blessed Saviour looks, with equal and unchanging love, upon all his true followers, of whatever name; and that it must be far more pleasing to him, to see them united in affection, and labouring diligently to spread his gospel, and to prepare themselves and others for the kingdom of heaven, than to see them contending about an external rite.

LEONARD WOODS.

Theological Seminary, Andover,
April 23, 1828.

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ERRATA.

Page 30, line 2 from bottom, expunge "our."

Page 36, line 3 from bottom, for "Anti-pædobaptists," read "Anti-pædobaptist."

INFANT BAPTISM.

LECTURE I.

FOUR DIRECTIONS TO THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS RESPECTING THE MANNER OF TREATING THE SUBJECT OF INFANT BAPTISM. — PREPARATORY CONSIDERATIONS AS TO THE KIND AND DEGREE OF EVIDENCE NECESSARY.—THE WANT OF AN EXPRESS DIVINE PRECEPT OR DECLARATION NO VALID OBJECTION.—THIS SHOWN IN REGARD TO THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH, FEMALE COMMUNION, AND THE AUTHORITY OF SOME OF THE SACRED WRITINGS.

THE doctrine of *Infant Baptism* has been the subject of long-continued controversy in the Christian world, and has given rise to more contention and asperity among the followers of Christ, than almost any other subject. It has been the occasion of separating into different communions, those who have been united in their belief on all other subjects, and animated by the same spirit of love to Christ and his cause. It is in consequence of this separation, that the subject of infant baptism has produced a warmth of feeling and discussion, so far beyond all just proportions. But I trust the time has arrived, when this subject can be treated in another manner, and when those who

differ in opinion respecting it, will cherish feelings of candour and forbearance towards one another. My earnest desire is to promote such feelings; being perfectly persuaded that it is the will of Him whom all Christians love and adore, that those who practise infant baptism, and those who do not, should love one another with a pure heart fervently, and diligently co-operate for the advancement of their common cause.

As you, my young brethren, for whom I have prepared these lectures, will be called to act a part not only in private, but in public, in regard to this subject, I shall suggest a few precautions and directions, for the purpose of rendering your influence more extensively useful to the cause of truth, and the cause of love.

First. *Take care not to magnify the subject beyond its real importance.*

The subject ought not indeed to be underrated, or treated as a trifle. It is no trifle. It obviously possesses a high degree of importance, and deserves to be maintained with firmness and zeal. But after all we must remember, it is an *outward rite*, and does not belong to the essential articles of the Christian religion. We ought never to treat it, or to feel respecting it, as though it were essential. If men are born of the Spirit; if they love and obey the Saviour, and are prepared for the kingdom of heaven; the great object for which Christ died, and for which we ought to labour, is obtained. It is clear, then, that the subject of baptism cannot be regarded as bearing any comparison in point of importance, with the conversion and salvation of sinners. And whatever discussion we

may think it our duty to undertake, and with whatever earnestness we may labour to bring men to receive what we sincerely believe to be a divine institution; we ought still to consider their eternal salvation as infinitely more important, than their receiving any particular rite. And if they show by their conduct, that they are friends to Christ and heirs of his kingdom, we should cordially thank God, and rejoice, how widely soever they may differ from us in regard to such a subject as this.

Second. *Consider that men, whose Christian character entitles them to our cordial affection and confidence, may be led to a different conclusion from us in regard to this rite.*

Whatever may have been the precepts of Christ, or his apostles, to those who enjoyed their personal instructions, it is a plain case, that there is no express precept respecting infant baptism in our sacred writings. The proof, then, that infant baptism is a divine institution, must be made out in another way. And that other way, though perfectly satisfactory to us, may not be so to those who have been placed in different circumstances from us. The circumstances of their birth and education may have led them, as a matter of course, to entertain different views on this subject; and those views may have been closely associated with the earliest and deepest impressions of divine truth on their minds, and with their most spiritual exercises and their purest enjoyments. Thus, their differing from us may have been owing to the influence which circumstances had upon the most amiable and pious sensibilities of their hearts.

Had any of us been in their circumstances, we might have adopted the same views.

Others, who come to the examination of this subject without the influence of such predisposing causes in early life, may unfortunately entertain such mistaken views of the *kind* or *degree of evidence* which is necessary to support a positive institution, that, with those mistaken views, the very uprightness of their hearts, and their desire to please God, may so operate as to prevent them from acceding to the rite of infant baptism.

Now if we duly regarded such considerations as these, instead of stigmatizing those Christians who reject infant baptism, or imputing wrong motives to them, we should exercise towards them the sincerest candour and kindness. If we can account for their peculiar views on this subject from their peculiar circumstances, and from that imperfection of the human mind which is common to them and to us, without any impeachment of their piety; then why should we not entertain towards them the same sentiments of love and confidence, and the same desire for their improvement and happiness, as if they were joined to the same denomination with us?

Third. *Never introduce this subject in the way of controversy, except when a pure regard to the interests of Christ's kingdom requires it.*

Undoubtedly a regard to the high and sacred interests of religion will lead you, at proper times, to exhibit and defend what you honestly believe to be scriptural views of this subject, and to do it with seriousness and zeal. But when this is to be done, it will be important, generally, that you enter upon

it with particular preparation, and pursue it in a regular discourse, instead of remarking upon it in a hasty or cursory manner. The practice of introducing such a subject, or even of alluding to it, from day to day, and on all occasions, betrays too much excitement of feeling, and is likely to promote too much in others. Let this subject, therefore, be brought forward only on occasions, when there is an obvious propriety in doing it, and then let it be presented in connexion with the weighty truths of religion, and treated with great moderation and seriousness. Thus you will show that it is a matter of conscience, not of passion.

Fourth. *Treat those who differ from you in regard to infant baptism, with uniform kindness.* Study to do them good. Cultivate towards them not only candour and good-will, but *generosity*, and exhibit this generosity in substantial acts. In this way you may hope to produce candour and kindness in them, and to prepare them to join their efforts with yours in promoting those common interests of Christ's kingdom, which are immeasurably more important than the *peculiar* interests either of their denomination or of yours. And should you find that the object of your wishes is not at once obtained, and that any of those, whom you labour to conciliate, and whose welfare you aim to promote, choose, after all, to stand aloof, and to retain all the warmth of party zeal, or even the spirit of animosity; still persevere in your kindness and candour towards them, remembering that such conduct will undoubtedly accomplish much more good in the end, than what appears at present; and that, whatever else it may

fail of accomplishing, it will have a happy effect on your own mind, and secure the approbation of God. Remember too, that the opposite course, that is, the exercise of unkindness and severity towards those Christians who differ from you, will injure their spiritual interests, and your own, and will augment all the evils of division and strife.

Having made these suggestions in regard to the spirit of mind with which the subject of infant baptism should be discussed, and the manner in which we should conduct ourselves towards those who differ from us, I shall call your attention to considerations relating more directly to the subject itself.

As a preparation for a profitable discussion, it is of special consequence that you should free your minds from all mistaken apprehensions, as to the *kind and degree of evidence* which is to be considered necessary. I introduce this subject here, because it relates to the mode of reasoning which is to be pursued, and it is obviously best, as far as may be, to settle our minds on this point at the outset.

Different conceptions respecting the proper mode of reasoning are evidently the principal causes of the difference which exists among men in regard to the question at issue. If in regard to any position, we look for evidence, of which the subject is not capable, or which is not accessible to us at the present time; the most diligent and persevering inquiry must leave us unconvinced. The proposition laid down may be true, but we shall not be satisfied of its truth. It may have sufficient evidence, but our mode of estimating evidence is

such as to prevent conviction. Suppose a man is accused before a court of justice of a particular crime, and suppose there is clear *circumstantial* evidence, and that only, of his guilt; if the court demand *direct, positive* proof of the crime, the evidence which they have will go for nothing, and the man, though manifestly guilty, must be pronounced innocent. But such is not the principle which governs our courts of justice, even in those proceedings which relate to life and death. They look for positive evidence, if it can be had; if not, they admit satisfactory evidence of another kind.

The importance of just views respecting evidence is obvious in regard to moral subjects generally. Even when the evidence sought is of the right kind, we must still take care not to mistake as to the degree of it which is necessary to produce conviction. In regard to any moral truth, it is not committed to us to determine by what evidence it shall be supported. On this point, our expectations, in many instances, may be greatly disappointed, and we may be obliged either to reject some of the most important principles in natural and revealed religion, or to be satisfied with evidence very different from what we once supposed necessary and attainable. Our object should be to discover the evidence, whatever may be its kind or degree, by which a proposition may be satisfactorily proved.

We are to remember also, that much depends on our prevailing *disposition*, or the *state of our minds*. Many a doctrine is of such a nature, that if our moral state is right, a small degree of

evidence will be sufficient to produce entire conviction of its truth. There is something in the original constitution, or in the acquired habit of the mind, or in other truths already admitted, which predisposes us to receive it. This constitution or habit of the mind, and the admission of other truths allied to the one under consideration, may have the *effect of evidence;* and if it could be clearly perceived and defined, it might appear also to have the *nature* of evidence. It may in fact be evidence of the best kind,—most suited to the nature of the subject, and most likely to produce a steady and permanent influence. Sometimes this state of the mind, and the evidence of other related truths, may be the only proof we can now have of a very important truth. And yet this truth may be as clearly apprehended and as firmly believed, and may exert as useful an influence on the mind, as though it were proved in any other way whatever. It will be very easy for those, who have been accustomed to think profoundly on moral subjects, to recall many instances of this.

The foregoing remarks will account for a fact of frequent occurrence—namely, that a man unhesitatingly believes a particular truth, and yet finds it very difficult to exhibit definitely the *reasons* of his belief. The evidence in such a case may be so concealed in its nature, or so gradual and insensible in its influence, that it will be very difficult, even for a nice observer of the operations of his own mind, clearly to describe it; and quite impossible, for men of but little cultivation. So that it cannot by any means be considered as a conclusive argument against the soundness of a man's faith, that he

is at present unable distinctly to assign the reasons of it. The manner in which he was brought to believe the truth may have been perfectly conformed to right reason, and perfectly satisfactory; and yet he may not have the skill requisite to trace it out, and describe it. To be prepared for this, he must have some acquaintance with the philosophy of the mind, and with the manner of developing its principles and operations in proper language. But for acquiring this, his situation may afford him no adequate advantages. And yet that same situation need not deprive him of the good effects of a rational and well established faith.

One more remark on this point. Although the evidence, by which we are able to prove a particular truth, may be feeble or obscure, we are not hence to conclude that it has not, even now, clear and perfect evidence in the view of those who possess a higher degree of knowledge. To superior intelligences, and certainly to the divine mind, every truth is attended with perfect evidence. But this perfect evidence may be, in part, or altogether, beyond the reach of the intellectual power which we now possess. In our present condition, we may be as unable to discern it, as we are to discern the light which illuminates the most distant parts of creation. But the growth of our mental faculties may hereafter enable us to discover more and more clearly the evidence which now lies concealed. Such is the consequence of our possessing limited powers of understanding, and our acquiring all our knowledge gradually.

If you apply the remarks which have been made to the subject under consideration, you will be

satisfied at once of the truth of the following position—namely, that *the want of an express, positive command of Scripture that infants should be baptised, is not to be considered as a valid objection against infant baptism.* As this position is of special importance, I shall take some particular pains to illustrate its truth.

Admitting, as we must, that all positive religious rites are *originally* founded on an express divine command, we cannot safely conclude that such a command will be repeated to all those who shall afterwards be under obligation to observe those rites, or even that the original command will be preserved and communicated to them in the sacred writings. Neither of these can be considered as indispensable, because sufficient evidence of a divine institution may be afforded in some other way. It may be afforded, particularly, by an *unwritten tradition.* It is unquestionable, that the knowledge of some extraordinary events of providence, or of some divine injunctions may be as truly and as certainly communicated in this way as in others; and we should, in many cases, consider a man, who should refuse to admit the truth and authority of a tradition, to be as unreasonable, as if he should refuse to admit the truth and authority of written or printed records.

If we should insist upon the repetition of a divine command at different times, or upon a written record of it, as indispensable, we should set aside one of the methods which God has in other cases adopted in regard to the positive institutions of religion. For example, what clear and certain proof have we that the divine command, enjoining

the observance of the Sabbath, or the offering of sacrifices, was repeated to the successive generations of men from Adam to Moses; or that they had evidence of either of those divine institutions, from historical records? And what certain proof is there of the repetition of the divine command, or the existence of any historical records, during the period from Abraham to Moses, respecting the rite of circumcision? And to come down to later times, what express command has God given to us, or to any Christians since the days of the apostles, requiring the first day of the week to be observed as a Sabbath? And what express declaration have we in the sacred records, that such a command was ever given either by Christ or his apostles? In regard to this, we who observe the Christian Sabbath, must either say, that a divine command has been given directly to us, or that a command originally given by Christ, has been preserved to us in the sacred records,—neither of which are we able to say;—or we must justify ourselves in observing the Lord's day, because some other considerations show that such is the will of God. On what ground, then, shall we proceed in regard to this subject? We must be sensible, that we have no direct command from God to us, and no record of any former command, to authorise us to regard the Christian Sabbath as a divine institution. Shall we then admit, that it is proper for us to fall in with the prevailing practice in regard to a religious rite, merely because we judge it becoming and useful? This we cannot admit. We must then rest the Christian Sabbath on the ground of the original institution of the Sabbath, as enjoined in

the fourth command of the decalogue; and we must at the same time admit, that the original institution was particularly modified at the commencement of the Christian dispensation, although our sacred writings no where expressly require such a modification. It cannot but be evident, then, that if we should insist upon the necessity of an express divine precept, either originally addressed to us, or transmitted to us by the sacred records, in order to justify us in observing the rite of *infant baptism*, we should contradict our own practice in regard to another subject very analogous to this.

And what shall we say in regard to *female communion?* The Lord's Supper is allowed to be a divine institution; but it was enjoined originally upon the apostles. The command was not given to females, and there is no express mention in the New Testament of their having ever received the Lord's Supper. We all believe it to be the will of God that they should partake. But how do we prove this? Not by any express *command of Christ.* Not by any *definite account* in the Scriptures, that they actually did partake. The argument on which we rest is derived from the reasonableness of the thing—from the uniform practice of the early Christian churches, as set forth in ecclesiastical history—and from what appears to be *implied* in the Scripture account. That is, we believe God has made known his will, that pious women should partake of the Lord's Supper, without the least appearance of any express command requiring it, and without any mention in the Scriptures of their ever having partaken in the first Christian churches. The

single question is, by what evidence we are satisfied that they ought to partake? And if we are satisfied in this case, without any express command, why should we not be in the other case?

My object in this place is to remove a mistake as to the kind and degree of evidence which shall be deemed conclusive, and to show that demanding an express precept in favour of infant baptism, that is, demanding a new and explicit command in favour of the dedication of children to God by the Christian rite of baptism, would be unreasonable and inconsistent. I wish every man to settle it in his mind perfectly and for ever, that, in a multitude of cases, other evidence ought to be received, and is received, as satisfactory.

Consider a moment how we proceed in regard to so momentous a subject, as the authority of some of the sacred writings. Take, for example, the Epistle to the Hebrews, which we receive as having been written by inspiration of God. But why do we thus receive it? What is the kind of evidence we have of its divine inspiration and divine authority? Do the other Scriptures give testimony to this epistle, and require us to receive it? No. Does the author of the epistle inform us that he wrote by divine inspiration? Does he even give us his own name? He does neither. We receive this book as of divine authority, *because ecclesiastical history teaches that it was thus received by the generality of the early Christians*, whom we know to have been far better qualified than we are, to form a right judgment in regard to its claims. It is primarily on the ground of such evidence as this, that we admit the epistle

into the sacred canon. The intrinsic excellence of the book, and its correspondence with other parts of Scripture, is also a consideration of great weight in favour of its divine authority. But this consideration is of a very different nature from what we understand by *express positive proof* from the word of God. The same as to some other parts of the Christian Scriptures. What is the kind of evidence which we have of their divine inspiration and authority? They are sanctioned by no voice from heaven; by no miracle; and by no declaration of inspired writers. But do we therefore reject them? No. We receive them as a part of the sacred canon on the ground of *historical* evidence; that is, the testimony of antiquity is in their favour. We rely on that testimony because it is the testimony of men competent to judge. And why should we not proceed on the same general principles in regard to infant baptism? If we have as good evidence from history in favour of this, as we have that the Apocalypse, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, and some other parts of the Bible, were written by inspired men, how can we consistently reject it?

Let it be remembered, that we did not originate the human mind, or the doctrines and institutions of religion, or the evidence which obliges us to believe those doctrines and observe those institutions. The faculties of the mind, the doctrines and precepts of religion, and the evidence which supports them, are all of God. The manner in which he has made known his will, and the kind and degree of evidence which he has afforded in favour of the truths and duties of religion, are un-

questionably conformed to our intellectual and moral constitution; and they are specially suited to excite us to diligent efforts; to give due exercise to candour; to make us feel the necessity of being guided by the divine Spirit; and finally, to produce such a conviction in us, as will best subserve the purposes of moral discipline. It is not God's way to give us evidence of the highest possible degree. As to many moral and religious truths, the evidence which supports them is far from being so clear and certain, as we should naturally expect. It often comes indirectly. It comes in the way of inference from other truths more plain and obvious. It sometimes consists in a kind of instinctive moral discernment,—a spontaneous operation of our faculties, which cannot be easily described. Sometimes it is the slow result of our experience and observation. And if a precept or institution is concerned, depending ultimately for its authority on a special divine revelation, that revelation is communicated to us through the channel of history or tradition; and the history or tradition is frequently attended with no small degree of obscurity. It is manifestly our duty, as intelligent beings, and in the diligent use of our rational powers, to hold ourselves ready to receive just such evidence as God is pleased to afford. And if any of us should undertake to prescribe to him, or to determine beforehand what evidence we must have to satisfy our faith; and if we should reject everything, which is not attended with just such evidence as we might judge most suitable; we should give up some, if not all of the most important moral truths, and should fall into a state of scepticism, most fearful in its influence on our present and our eternal interests.

LECTURE II.

REASONING OF THE FORMER LECTURE CONFIRMED BY PARTICULAR CONSIDERATIONS IN FAVOUR OF INFANT BAPTISM. 1. ITS SUITABLENESS TO THE RELATION OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN. 2. THIS RELATION HAD BEEN MARKED BY A RELIGIOUS RITE THROUGH THE PATRIARCHAL AND MOSAIC DISPENSATIONS.—THAT RITE RESPECTED SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.—OBJECTION CONSIDERED.

In the last lecture, I endeavoured to support the following position—namely, that *the want of an express declaration of Scripture in favour of infant baptism is not a valid argument against it.*

Thus far my remarks have respected infant baptism as a religious institution in a general view. But there are special considerations in relation to this particular rite; considerations which will give to the remarks I have made an additional force. That is to say, there is special reason why we should not demand an express precept of Scripture for baptizing children, and special reason why other evidence should satisfy us, that infant baptism is a divine institution.

The reason is, that *a religious rite of long standing, and intended for the same general purposes with baptism, had, by express appointment of God, been uniformly applied to infant childdren.* The existence of such a rite, and the high

importance which was universally attached to it by the people of God, would make it easy to substitute in its place a rite of the same general import, but different in outward form. This last rite, or rather this last *form* of a permanent institution, would require less formality of divine injunction—less appearance of interposition on the part of God to introduce it, than to introduce an institution which, in its design and application, is entirely new. Those Christians, who had been familiar with the previous rite of circumcision, that is, the previous mode of consecrating children to God, must have been predisposed in favour of infant baptism, and must have been ready, at any intimation of Christ or his apostles, at once to receive it. Yea, they must have been ready to fall in with it, as a matter of course. The public consecration of children to God by a religious rite, had for many ages been a standing practice in the church. It came not from Moses, but from Abraham, the father of those who believe, in all nations. And what is the consecration of children to God by *baptism*, but a previous institution of God, so modified in regard to its form, as to agree with the Christian dispensation? In such a case, especially if the original institution was held in high estimation, and attended with high endearments, what more could be deemed necessary, than that the divine will should be made known, as to the *new form* of the institution? After such an expression of the divine will, we should think that the institution in its new form, that is, the dedication of children to God by baptism, would immediately go into practice, and that whatever pertained to its general

design and use, would be continued, unless some divine direction was interposed to prevent. It must then, I apprehend, be manifest to all, that in the case now under consideration, there was less occasion for an express command from God, to give sanction and prevalence to the new rite, that is, to the *new form* of *the original institution*, than if no rite of similar import had existed before.

In this as in other respects, you will perceive a striking analogy between the institution of infant baptism, and that of the Christian Sabbath. The institution of a Sabbath, one day in seven, had been established from the creation of the world. Under the reign of Christ, the original institution was to undergo a certain alteration. But how was this alteration effected? How was the Christian church brought to give up the seventh day, and to observe the first, as a Sabbath? Was an express divine command formally announced, in regard to the Lord's day? Did God come forth in his majesty, as he did on Sinai, and say in the hearing of the apostles and early Christians, "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the *first* day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God?" And was such a command as this put on record by the inspired writers, and transmitted from one generation to another, as the fourth command in the decalogue was? Nothing like this has taken place, nor have we thought it at all necessary. How then have we been brought to give up the *seventh* day as a Sabbath, and to keep the *first* in its place? We find no command of Christ or his apostles; and we find no *express declaration* of Scripture, that the apostles and first Christians

uniformly kept the first day as a Sabbath. But there are several things in the Acts and Epistles, which plainly imply that they did so; and besides this, we have historical evidence that the Lord's day was generally observed by the early Christian churches, and that the seventh day Sabbath gradually fell into disuse. Thus, without any appearance of a positive command, on the ground of what was practised by those who lived near the apostles, and who had the best advantages to form a correct judgment, and because too, though without any *express declaration* of Scripture, there is reason to think, that such was the practice of the apostles; we feel ourselves authorised and obliged to observe the first day of the week as a Sabbath. But would Christians have been so easily satisfied of their obligations to keep the Christian Sabbath, had there not been a weekly Sabbath enjoined by divine command, and uniformly observed by God's people through preceding ages? The more seriously I have reflected on this subject, the more fully have I become satisfied, that the previous existence of similar observances must have produced such an effect on the minds of the first Jewish Christians, as perfectly to prepare them to receive the Christian Sabbath and infant baptism, without any new enactment, or any explicit declaration whatever in their favour. But they could not have been prepared for this, had these institutions been altogether new.

After considering so particularly the proper mode of reasoning, and suggesting what seemed necessary to prepare the way for a fair discussion

of the subject, I shall proceed to the arguments which, in my view, prove that infant baptism is required of God. In treating this controverted subject, I shall take the liberty to follow my own habit of thinking, and, with little reference to the views of others, shall lay before you those considerations, which have had the greatest influence on my own mind, and which, after much anxious inquiry, have conducted me to a satisfactory conclusion.

The first consideration I shall suggest is, that *the rite of infant baptism manifestly corresponds with the natural relation between parents and children.* It is not enough to say that there is no inconsistency between the two things, and that the relation of parents and children can afford no objection *against* infant baptism. For nothing is more evident than that this rite has a perfect *suitableness* to the relation of parents and children. This relation is of such a nature and attended with such circumstances, that infant baptism becomes obviously, and in the highest degree, just and proper. I acknowledge that this argument does not by itself, prove infant baptism to have been appointed by God, and to be obligatory upon Christians. But it shows, at least, that if God is pleased to appoint it, the appointment must be regarded as having a perfect fitness and propriety. It shows too, that we ought readily to fall in with the practice, if there is any plain indication of God's will in its favour—that a lower degree of evidence is sufficient to bring us under obligation to adopt it as a divine institution, than if it had no such obvious fitness.

This view of the subject cannot be considered as

objectionable by any one, who well considers how we form our opinions in regard to many other subjects. How, for instance, do we reason in regard to a subject refered to in the last lecture, that is, *female communion?* We say, it is manifestly *suitable;* that pious women have the same reason to commemorate the death of Christ, as pious men; that its being enjoined in general terms is a sufficient indication of the divine will in regard to the ordinance; and that pious women, having all the general reasons to partake of the ordinance with pious men, have a fair title to partake, on the ground of the general appointment, without waiting for a command addressed specifically to them. But we could not think this correct in any case, where there was no evident fitness in the thing itself, and where every thing must depend on a positive divine precept.

The same as to the Lord's day. We perceive it to be altogether *just* and *proper* that so important an event as the resurrection of Christ should be commemorated, and that the day, on which it took place, should be consecrated to the honour of the Saviour, by all his followers. In this way we are prepared to think favourably of changing the Sabbath from the *seventh* day to the *first.* And being thus impressed with the fitness of the thing, we are easily satisfied with the circumstances, which indicate that this is the will of God. When we find that the apostles and first Christians observed that day, and that it became the practice of Christian churches universally to do so, we feel at once that the practice was suitable; that it corresponded with the nature and ends of the Christian religion,

and that what the apostles and first Christians did, manifested the pleasure of God; and so, without suspicion we fall in with the prevailing practice. But had we no such perception of the fitness of the thing, how could prevailing practice have such an effect upon us?

In forming our judgment on such a subject as this, we should keep in mind, that God has given us reason and moral sense, and thus rendered us capable of discerning the relations of things, and of determining, in most cases, what is suitable to those relations; and that it is often in this way only, that we are able to discover the will of God.

The relation existing between parents and children is seldom taken into serious consideration; and it is still more seldom the case, that its nature and importance are rightly apprehended. A little attention to the circumstances of this relation, particularly to the affections which attend it, the obligations involved in it, and the consequences resulting from it, will satisfy any one, that it is among the most interesting and momentous relations on earth.

Every human being, from the commencement of his existence, is the object of an affection indescribably ardent and tender. This affection, which lodges in the hearts of parents, and results necessarily from the constitution they have received from their Creator, is universal, except where that constitution is greatly perverted. Whenever a child is born, an affection springs up in the hearts of his parents, which will afford protection to his weakness—which will prompt them to constant, untiring labours, and make it even a pleasure for them to

forego the common gratifications of life, and to endure self denial, watching, and fatigue, for the sake of that helpless being who is entrusted to their care.* For a time this affection operates without rational intercourse, without acquaintance, and without any return of service, or even of gratitude; for of every thing like this the new born infant is incapable. Parental affection is fixed and durable. Causes which extinguish other kinds of affection, generally leave this in all its strength, and often prove an occasion of increasing its warmth and activity. The affection of parents, instead of ceasing with the feebleness and the wants of their offspring, extends its kind regards over his whole life, and when regulated by religious principle, aims at nothing less than to promote his happiness through an immortal existence.

Now the mere fact that the relation of parents to their offspring is attended with an affection of so unparalleled a nature, marks this relation as one of vast consequence, and indicates that God intended to make it subservient to very important ends in his government.

This relation involves high obligations. The precepts of God's word on this subject are such as sound reason must approve. Parents are required to *bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* The duties of parents are so various and constant, that, if rightly performed, they must occupy a considerable portion of human life; and they are so arduous, as to require a high effort of our rational and moral powers, and the aids of God's Holy Spirit. These duties are so

* See Brown's Lectures on the Philosophy of the Mind.

important, that they cannot be neglected without consequences the most fatal to the interests of the church and the world. The duties of parents, and the influence which they ought to possess over their children, must generally be considered as the chief means of forming the character of the rising generation, and preparing them for usefulness; the chief means of saving the souls of men, and propagating the Christian religion from one generation to another.

These remarks are all confirmed by the word and providence of God. From the beginning of the world, the character and condition of children have generally resulted from the conduct of parents. The peculiar character of a tribe or nation has commonly been derived from the character of its father or head. This extends to the religious as well as to the social and secular character. The history of the Christian church shows, that after it has once been established in any place, it has depended, for its continuance and increase, chiefly upon the success of parents in promoting the piety of their children.

The foregoing remarks are not made to prove, that it is in fact the appointment of God that children should be *baptized;* but to show, that, according to our best views of the subject, infant baptism has an obvious fitness. If the relation between parents and children is so vastly important, it is manifestly proper that it should have some mark set upon it, to show in what estimation it is held by the Creator of the world. And as this relation involves, in so high a degree, the interests of religion, it is manifestly proper that it should be

marked by a *religious rite.* If a public religious rite may be properly used for the purpose of impressing truth or duty on the minds of men in any case, it may surely be in this. Thus the considerations above stated, though they do not directly prove infant baptism to be a divine institution, are sufficient to show that such a religious rite entirely corresponds with the nature and design of the relation between parents and children, and that it is very reasonable that such a relation should be marked by some expressive sign.

My second argument is, that *the relation between parents and children was actually marked by a divinely appointed and significant rite, through the patriarchal and the Mosaic economy.*

Here observe that *the same rite was appointed for parents and children.* Observe too, that this rite, intended for children as well as parents, did not originate in the *Mosaic ritual,* but in the family of Abraham, the father of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, and was practised among the Israelites from generation to generation till the death of Christ.

This rite evidently had a primary relation to *spiritual* blessings. It was a confirmation of that most gracious and spiritual promise which God made to Abraham, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed. Circumcision,* the apostle tells us, Rom. iv. 11, *was a seal of the righteousness of faith which Abraham had, while uncircumcised.* God's covenant with Abraham and his posterity did indeed include a great variety of *temporal* blessings; particularly, their title to the land of Canaan, and all their institutions and laws rela-

ting to their worldly state. But these were only appendages of the spiritual good secured to the obedient by the divine promises. The promises of that economy were as high and spiritual, as any contained in the Scriptures; and the principal one, *I will be your God*, is referred to in the New Testament, as involving the most precious gospel blessings. Heb. viii. 10; 2 Cor. vi. 16. The old Testament economy contained also the most spiritual and holy precepts. It contained the decalogue, and various other commands, requiring holiness of heart and life. The character which God exhibited was the same under the former dispensation, as under the latter. The character, which he required of those who were under the former economy, was the same as he required of the followers of Christ. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xx. 7; Matt. xxii. 37; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

It may indeed be alleged, that the Israelites, as a nation were not holy—that they did not render to God a sincere spiritual service—and that the economy, under which they were placed, did not in fact secure to them spiritual blessings. This is true. But this is not to be charged to that system of laws and rites and promises, which God gave for their benefit, but to themselves. Had they been obedient to the laws of that economy, circumcision would have been an actual confirmation to them of spiritual blessings. Now surely we are not to judge of the nature of the former economy from the character of those who were placed under it. As a general fact, their character was directly

contrary to the nature and design of that economy; as really so, as the character of the bulk of nominal Christians in the most corrupt age of the church has been contrary to the design of the *Christian* economy. But who would think of urging the degraded, corrupt character exhibited at any time by nominal Christians, as a proof that the *Christian* dispensation was not intended to be of a spiritual nature, or that its rites were not intended to be signs of spiritual blessings? No distinction can be more obvious, than that between the real nature of a divine economy, and the manner in which it is used by those who are placed under it. As to the former economy, the question is not, what was the actual character of the Israelites; but what was the character which they *ought* to have possessed—the character which *the precepts* and *the spirit* of the dispensation *required* them to possess? Now if, from generation to generation, they had been obedient and holy according to the laws of that economy, who could ever have doubted that the economy was a spiritual one, and that circumcision was a seal of spiritual blessings? So far as they kept God's covenant, it was in fact a seal of spiritual blessings both to parents and children. It set forth God's design that the true religion, with all its attendant benefits, should, by means of parental faithfulness and prayer, be transmitted from one generation to another. And if the Israelites universally from Abraham to Christ had truly conformed to that divine institution, then circumcision would have been in fact what it was designed to be, a confirmation of God's promise, *I will be a God to thee and thy seed.* And let

me repeat it, that the nature and design of a rite, instituted by God, cannot be altered by the disobedience and perverseness of men.

I well know that there are some passages in the New Testament, especially in the Epistle to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews, which seem at first view to militate against what I have advanced in regard to the spiritual nature of the Mosaic economy. This is a subject which requires a longer and more minute investigation, than would be proper in this place. I must therefore refer you to what others have written, after suggesting two things, which I think very obvious.

First. The apostle in his whole argument in Gal. iii. makes a distinction between the *Mosaic* economy, or law, and God's covenant with *Abraham;* and he takes special pains to teach, that the covenant with Abraham was *unalterable;* that believers in Christ come under that very covenant; that they are *Abraham's seed,* and heirs according to the promise, that is, the promise made to *Abraham;* and that it is the blessing of Abraham —the blessing promised to Abraham and his seed, which all believers inherit. It must, therefore, be obvious, that whatever there was in the Mosaic economy which was earthly and changeable, *God's covenant with Abraham was spiritual and immutable,* securing all the blessings to which believers in Christ are entitled. And it must not be forgotten, that circumcision was first appointed to be the seal, not of the *Mosaic* economy, but of *this spiritual and immutable covenant of God with Abraham.**

* See Note A, at the end of the volume. [J. M.]

Second. When in Heb. viii. the writer says, that the first covenant, (evidently meaning the Mosaic or Sinai covenant,) was faulty and ineffectual, that it had waxed old and was ready to vanish away, he evidently refers to the *Levitical priesthood* and the *ancient ritual*, which were both appointed only for temporary purposes, and were to cease after the death of Christ. If so, then what reason is there to doubt that a spiritual and unchangeable covenant, the same as the one made with Abraham, was *contained in* the Mosaic dispensation? The spiritual precepts and promises found there clearly prove that it was so in fact. Accordingly, circumcision, though it was connected with the Mosaic ritual, and made a part of it, was still, through that whole dispensation, what it was originally designed to be—a *confirmation to all true saints, of the spiritual blessings secured by God's covenant with Abraham.*

The general position, then, stands firm, that *the covenant, of which circumcision was appointed to be the seal, was spiritual, gracious, and immutable.**

* I would rather express myself thus,—"The general position, then, stands firm, that *the covenant, in connection with which circumcision was appointed to be a sign, was spiritual, gracious, and immutable.*" [J. M.]

LECTURE III.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION FOUNDED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.—WE CANNOT CONCLUDE THAT CHRIST DID NOT GIVE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS ON ANY SUBJECT FROM THE FACT THAT SUCH INSTRUCTIONS ARE NOT RECORDED.—THE SCRIPTURES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IMPLY THAT THE CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS ARE TO BE BAPTIZED.—RULE OF INTERPRETATION: VIZ. WE MUST PUT OURSELVES, AS FAR AS MAY BE, IN THE PLACE OF THOSE WHO GAVE, AND OF THOSE WHO RECEIVED INSTRUCTION. — CIRCUMSTANCES OF THOSE TO WHOM CHRIST GAVE THE COMMISSION TO PROSELYTE AND BAPTIZE ALL NATIONS.—HOW THEY MUST HAVE UNDERSTOOD THIS COMMISSION.—PROSELYTE BAPTISM. — GENERAL REPRESENTATION OF SCRIPTURE AND COURSE OF PROVIDENCE.

We now come to the introduction of the Christian dispensation, and the appointment of baptism as a sign of discipleship to Christ, or, which is the same thing, a seal of God's covenant with believers.*

* Instead of saying, "and the appointment of baptism as a sign of discipleship to Christ, or, which is the same thing, a seal of God's covenant with believers," I would express myself thus,—"and the appointment of baptism as a sign of spiritual blessings which still continue to be vouchsafed under the reign of Christ." The spiritual blessings bestowed are all summed up in the gift of the purifying Spirit, emblematically represented in the water employed. The same provision for our purification was represented in circumcision. [J. M.]

Here let me remark, first, that *the Christian religion was evidently founded upon the Old Testament Scriptures, and was a continuation of the religion there taught.* Christ frequently declares that the Scriptures of the Old Testament make known his character, and the principles of his gospel. He frequently appeals to the law and the prophets and the psalms, for the confirmation of what he taught. The apostles do the same, and clearly make it known to be their wish, that the soundness of their instructions should be tested by the Scriptures; and we well know that whenever they speak of the Scriptures, they refer to the Old Testament. Carefully peruse the Evangelists, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, and see in what manner Christ and the apostles treat the Scriptures, and how they labour to show that Christianity is not a *new religion*, but the very religion which was taught in the law and the prophets; from which consideration they most justly conclude that no man can reject Christianity without rejecting the Old Testament Scriptures; and that no one can truly believe those Scriptures, without believing Christianity.

I cannot think that any quotations in proof of the foregoing remarks will be thought necessary by those who are conversant with the Scriptures.

From such a view of the subject it seems very natural to conclude, that any general principle of religion, and any practice established under the former economy, will be continued, though it may be in a different form, under the Christian economy, unless the reasons have ceased on which that principle or practice was founded, or unless God has

expressly set it aside. For example, it is just to conclude that *public worship*, which was established under the former dispensation, will be continued under the latter, though, doubtless, with such changes in the *form* as the peculiarities of the Christian economy shall require. If Christ or his apostles ever intimated to the Jews, that a change was necessary as to the spirit or substance of their religion, they did it, unquestionably, with reference to the corruptions and abuses which had prevailed, not with reference to the religion which was actually taught in the Old Testament.

The institution of the Sabbath, which has already been referred to, furnishes another illustration of the propriety of our reasoning on the present subject. This institution rests on the essential principles of our intellectual and moral nature. There must be a *sacred day*—a day devoted to the worship of God. There is the same reason for it under both dispensations. The change, then, if there be any, must relate to outward *form* and *circumstance*. By the will of him who is the Lord of the Sabbath, the particular day to be observed, under the Christian economy, is different, and the observance attended with fewer and simpler ceremonies. Still there is a sacred day every week under the present dispensation, as really as there was under the Jewish or patriarchal. In respect to the necessity and utility of such a day, and the command of God to observe it, there is no change.

The same appears to be true in regard to the seal of God's covenant, and of the relation which his people sustain to him.* The importance of

* See Note A. [J. M.]

such a seal to promote in the highest degree the ends of religion, must be obvious to all who are acquainted with the constitution of the human mind; and it must be equally obvious in all ages. It is reasonable, therefore, to think, that under both dispensations, God's covenant will have a seal, whatever difference there may be in the form of it. Why should not the unalterable relation of children to parents, and of both to God, be marked by a religious rite now, as well as formerly? According to the will of God, that rite, under the former economy was circumcision; under the present, it is baptism. The general *import* of the rite is the *same;* its *form is changed.*

But I remark, secondly, *that we cannot certainly conclude that our Saviour did not give his apostles specific instructions on this or any other subject, merely because such instructions are not preserved in the records of the New Testament.* The evangelists have given us no more than a very summary account of what Christ taught during his public ministry. They could do nothing more than this, as John plainly suggests at the end of his gospel, where he tells us, that *if all should be written, the world itself could not contain the books.* We are not, however, to infer from this, that the instructions of Christ, which are not found in the sacred records, were unimportant, or that they had no effect, or were of no use,—or even that their effect does not reach to the present day, or that they are of no use to us. They were designed to have their primary and direct influence on the minds of the apostles themselves, who were to be teachers of the Chris-

tian religion, and were, at the commencement of Christ's reign, to give a right direction to all the affairs of his kingdom. Accordingly, the effect of Christ's instructions to them must have appeared in the constitution and form of the churches which they established. In various respects this is the only method in which it is possible for us to determine what Christ's instructions were; and under proper restrictions, it is a just and satisfactory method.

From the *effects* which the apostles produced, we may learn what they *did;* and from what they *did* we may learn what instructions they received from Christ. In this way we proceed in regard to the passover, and the seventh-day Sabbath. There is no record of any direction of Christ to set aside either of them; but we find that they were set aside among those Christians whom the apostles taught. From this we may reasonably conclude what instructions the apostles gave; and then, what they received from Christ. And we form this conclusion respecting the last, without the mention of any command or counsel from Christ to his apostles, or from the apostles to Christian converts. We find, farther, that Christians did, in some special sense, observe the first day of the week. This the sacred records clearly show. We learn from other sources, that while the seventh-day Sabbath gradually ceased to be observed in the primitive churches, the Lord's day was observed in its place. From these circumstances we infer what the apostles taught the first Christians, and what they themselves were taught by Christ. And I venture to say, if the New

Testament were altogether silent respecting the first day of the week being made a sacred day, and if we only found that the Christian church does now uniformly observe the Lord's day, as a Sabbath, and that this has been the case from the time of the first Christian churches,—we should be satisfied that such was the will of Christ; that he had so instructed the apostles, and that they had so instructed the first Christians.

The same general remarks apply to the present subject. There is no mention made in the New Testament of any definite instructions of Christ to the apostles, or of the apostles to Christians, in regard to the baptism of little children; but can we infer from this, that no definite instructions *were* given? Such instructions might have produced the effect designed, first, upon the apostles themselves, and then, through them, upon the minds of Christian converts. And it may remain for us to learn what those instructions of Christ and the apostles were, from what we discover to have been the practice of the first churches. We should unquestionably reason just so now, in a similar case. Suppose, without any previous knowledge of the subject, we should visit a place in Africa, where a Christian missionary had successfully preached, and founded a church, he having been the only minister of the gospel who had laboured in that place; and suppose our visit to take place some time after his death: would not the prevailing usages of that church show, to our perfect satisfaction, what instructions he gave? If we should find it the practice of that church to baptize only adult believers, and to do it by immersion, should we not conclude at

once, that the minister who taught them was a Baptist?* But if we should find that the church, thus founded by his faithful labours, and guided by his wisdom, was in the practice of baptizing their infant children, and that this had been their uniform practice from the beginning—should we not conclude that he *taught* them to baptize their children? Most certainly men in general, of whatever denomination, would judge in this manner, and would be satisfied what the instructions of any distinguished missionary were, from the prevailing usages of a church founded by his influence. And such would be the conclusion we should form, for a long time after his decease, unless the influence of subsequent teachers of different views, or some other visible causes, had operated to produce a change. Indeed it is clear, that the form and usages of a church in any place must be derived from the principal teacher, and conformed to his views. And if those Christians who deny infant baptism could, among the treasures of antiquity, discover a history bearing every mark of authenticity, and containing a particular account of the churches in Asia Minor immediately after the days of the apostles; and if that history should plainly affirm that those churches never baptized children, and that the children of believers, on coming to adult years, and professing their faith in Christ, were *then* baptized;—I say, if those who deny infant baptism, could find, from authentic records, that such was the usage of those churches—they would

* Our author means Antipædobaptists. Pædobaptists are all Baptists; that is, they all regard baptism as an ordinance of God. [J. M.]

doubtless think this to be a valuable discovery, and the uniform practice of those churches to baptize adult believers, and those only, to be a valid proof that they were so taught by the apostles.

But I shall now proceed to argue the point from the inspired records, just as they are. My position is, that *the Scriptures of the New Testament, understood according to just rules of interpretation, imply that the children of believers are to be baptized.*

The rule of interpretation, which is of the highest consequence, and which will aid us most in discovering the true meaning of the Scriptures in relation to the subject now before us, is, that we *put ourselves, as far as may be, in the place of those who gave instruction, and of those who received it.*

You will easily perceive the importance and necessity of this rule: for, in numberless instances, a declaration or direction derives its peculiar meaning from the consideration of the person who speaks, or of those to whom he speaks. Who does not know that the same combination of words has a very different meaning in one place from what it has in another? Even when the general sense of the words is the same, the circumstances of the case must determine the extent of meaning which they bear, or what is implied in the application of them to the subject in hand. Some fact, some particular custom, or habit of thinking, may give them a specific signification; and without taking such fact or custom into view we shall be likely to miss the exact sense and import of the words. In how many instances should we be at a loss respecting the meaning of historians, poets, and orators,

without taking into account the age and place in which they lived, and the character, laws, and usages of the people with whom they were conversant, and for whom they wrote.

As a single illustration of the importance of this principle, look at a text in the Old Testament, in which God requires that the *Sabbath* should be sanctified. How do you ascertain which day is meant? Simply by considering what previous instructions and commands were given to the Israelites on the subject, and what their usage was. In this way we are satisfied that the *seventh* day was meant. Look now at a law in an English or American statute-book, requiring the people to abstain from secular business on the *Sabbath.* How do you ascertain which day is meant here? In the same manner as before—by considering what has been the usage of Christians generally, and particularly of that people for whom the law was made. In this way we are satisfied that the *first* day of the week must be meant.

Let us now come directly to the subject. Christ appointed baptism to be administered to all who should become proselytes to his religion—that is, to all Christians; and when he was about leaving his apostles, who were to be employed as the instruments of converting the world, he gave them this commission: "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The word μαθητευσατε, rendered *teach*, properly signifies, *make disciples—proselyte—convert to the Christian religion.* The commission, then, is this: "*Go ye, proselyte, or make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in*

the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This command was given *by a Jew*, who was perfectly acquainted with all the institutions and laws appertaining to the religion of the Jews—with the customs and usages of that people, and with the dispensations of Divine providence towards them; and the command was addressed *to Jews.* Now whatever there was in this general circumstance which could have an influence upon the meaning of the command, or which would naturally cause it to be understood in one way or in another, is worthy of special attention.

Let it be considered, then, that the Jews had long been accustomed to making proselytes from paganism to their religion. The obligation to do this had been brought to view in the Divine law, and rules had been given for the proper treatment of proselytes. To make proselytes was regarded as a great object;* and the efforts of the Jews to bring others to embrace their religion were crowned with extensive success. Proselytes were numerous both in Greece and in Rome; and it seems that, after the persecuting reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, some whole nations, as the Idumeans, Itureans, and Moabites, professed the Jewish faith. And whenever Gentiles embraced the Jewish religion, they were treated in regard to circumcision, according to the Jewish law; that is, they were circumcised—*parents and children.* This was the law of the Jews, and this was the uniform practice. Hence it must be easy to determine, how Christian Jews would be likely to understand the

* See Matt. xxiii. 15. [J. M.]

duty of proselyting idolators and unbelievers to the true religion. Suppose that God, previously to the Christian dispensation, had selected twelve Jews, and sent them forth to convert Greeks and Romans to their religion, and, without any mention of children, had merely given them this commission: Go ye, *proselyte* and *circumcise* them,—would they not have understood such a commission as requiring them to circumcise the children of converted Greeks and Romans? Unquestionably they would; and why? *Because they were Jews, and had always been accustomed to the circumcision of children, as well as of parents.* In obedience to this Divine command, they would have gone to the people specified, and in all the instances in which men were made proselytes, would have circumcised them and their children.

Again. Suppose, in such a case, a command had been given, which included baptism with circumcision — thus: "Go ye, and proselyte those nations, circumcising and baptizing them." Still not a word about *children;* but simply, "Go, and proselyte those nations to Judaism, *circumcising and baptizing them.*" Most certainly they would have understood that baptism, as well as circumcision, was to be applied *to proselytes and their children.*

But suppose that baptism had been put in the place of circumcision, as the sign to be put upon proselytes to Judaism; and so the command to those Jewish teachers had been, "Go ye, proselyte and baptize the people of Greece and Rome;"—must they not have understood the command in the same way? Surely those who were acquainted

with the commands and institutions which God gave to Abraham and to Moses, and who had always been accustomed to observe them, could have had no doubt that the rite which marked the relation of proselytes to God, was to be applied to their children also.

Thus far all must have the same opinion. Such a Divine command to Jews before the time of Christ, whether it appointed circumcision only, or circumcision together with baptism, or baptism instead of circumcision, as a mark to be applied to those who were proselyted to the Jewish religion, must have been understood as intended to be applied also to *the children* of proselytes.

You will keep in mind that I am now availing myself of one of the most important principles of interpretation, and attempting to show what influence must have been produced upon the meaning of Christ's direction, by the circumstance that he was a *Jew*, and that he gave the direction *to Jews*, whose laws and usages had been what the Scriptures represent.

But, to illustrate this principle still further—suppose it to have been the appointment of our Saviour, after his public ministry began, that circumcision should be applied to converts to Christianity, as it had been to converts to Judaism; and suppose him to have said to his apostles, "Go ye, proselyte all nations, and *circumcise* them," making no mention of children;—could the apostles have doubted a moment, in such a case, whether circumcision was meant to be applied to the children of proselytes? But why should we suppose they would put a different construction

upon the commission they received from Christ, because baptism was made the sign of proselytes, instead of circumcision? There is evidently nothing in the import of the sign, which would require any difference in its application; for baptism is appointed simply as a mark, or sign, to be put upon those who are proselyted to Christianity. If circumcision had been continued, and Christ had commanded it to be put upon Christian proselytes, as it had been upon proselytes to the religion of Moses, the meaning and use of it would have been the same as the meaning and use of baptism.

But there is another consideration which may help to satisfy us still farther, how the apostles must have understood their commision to baptize converts to Christianity—namely, the previous practice of the Jews to baptize proselytes.

The evidence of such a practice among the Jews has been satisfactory to many men of distinguished learning and sound judgment. Knapp, in his Theology, gives the following brief view of the arguments in proof of proselyte baptism—namely, "the unanimous testimony of all the Rabbins; the universality of this practice among the Jews of the second century"; (and he says, "it can scarcely be thought that they would have first adopted it from Christians, who were so hated and despised by them;") "the striking similarity of the Jewish expressions concerning the baptism of proselytes, to those which occur in the New Testament respecting the Christian rite; and the circumstance that Josephus, in his account of John the Baptist, does not express the

least surprise at the practice of baptism, as a new and unwonted ceremony." Knapp suggests also, what I think to be deserving of special consideration, that if the baptism of proselytes was customary among the Jews at, or before, the time of Christ, many things could be explained more clearly from this circumstance, than in any other way.*

If, then, it had been the custom of the Jews to baptize proselytes to their religion, as we certainly have much reason to think, it is clear that the baptism of proselytes by John and by Christ was no new thing. It is at any rate clear, that baptism, *as a religious rite*, was not new, but had been familiarly known among the Jews, from the time of Moses. So that John, the forerunner of Christ, did not institute a *new rite*, but took one which had been long used for ceremonial purification, and which probably had been used in the case of proselytes to the Jewish religion, and applied it to those Jews who listened to his instructions, and gave signs of repentance. And afterwards Christ ordained, that baptism, which had been thus used among the Israelites for purification, and had been applied to Jews who repented under the preaching of John, and probably to converted Gentiles, should from that time be applied to all in every part of the world, who embraced Christianity. The work of proselyting men to the true

* Those who wish to investigate this subject for themselves, are referred to Lightfoot, on John iii.; Michaelis Dogm. § 180; Ernesti Vindiciæ arbitrii divini, § 49; Wall's History of Baptism; Jahn's Archæol; Wetstein on Matt. iii. 6; and the works of Dantz, Zeigler, Less, and others.

religion had before been carried on within narrow limits. It was now to be carried on extensively; and baptism, in the Christian form, was now to be administered to all proselytes. "Go ye, and proselyte all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In judging of the true meaning and intent of this commission, the apostles would naturally consider in what manner baptism had been administered, and, particularly, its having been applied to *proselytes and their children*—if, as we apprehend, that was in fact the case. This last circumstance, in addition to the one with which they were so familiar — that of having children, as well as parents, consecrated to God by circumcision, must have had a direct and decisive influence upon the construction which the apostles put upon their commission, and must have led them to conclude, that, under the Christian dispensation, *children*, as well as parents, were to be devoted to God by baptism, unless some contrary instruction was given to prevent such a conclusion. "If Christ, in his command to baptize all, Matt. xxviii., had wished children to be excepted, he must have expressly said this. For, since the first disciples of Christ, as native Jews, knew no other way than for children to be introduced into the Israelitish church by circumcision, it was natural that they should extend this to baptism, if Christ did not expressly forbid it. Had he, therefore, wished that it should not be done, he would surely have said so in definite terms."*

* Knapp's Theology, recently published in Halle.

Another consideration which shows that it must have been perfectly consistent for the apostles to understand their commission in the manner above stated, is, that the Scriptures so often represent parents and children as receiving the same treatment from Divine providence, and as being closely connected together in respect to their most important interests. "I will be your God, and the God of your seed." "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands," that is, thousands of generations, "of them that love me, and keep my commandments." "That he may prolong his days, he and his children." "Keep my commandments, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee." "They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." With such representations as these, the course of Divine providence had a striking correspondence. It was a general fact, that, whether mercies or judgments came upon men, their children were partakers of the same. And this principle of the Divine administration had a special reference to the interests of religion. Now the apostles were perfectly acquainted with this principle. They had the highest reverence for these sacred writings, which exhibited such views of the connexion between parents and children; and they had been brought up under a Divine economy, which afforded continual confirmation of what their Scriptures taught in regard to this connexion. What violence, then, must they have done to all those habits of thinking and feeling, which they had derived from the word and

providence of God, had they supposed that parents and children were no longer to be connected together in the interests of religion, or in public and sacred transactions; or that the connexion existing between them was no longer to be marked, as it always had been, with the sign of the dispensation under which they were placed.

LECTURE IV.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE APOSTLES REVIEWED, AND SHOWN TO BE CONCLUSIVE. —MODE OF UNDERSTANDING A CHARTER.—DID CHRIST GIVE ANY PREVIOUS INSTRUCTION WHICH COULD HAVE SATISFIED THE APOSTLES IN WHAT MANNER THEY WERE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR COMMISSION, OR HOW THEY WERE TO REGARD CHILDREN?—MATT. XIX. 13, 14, PARTICULARLY CONSIDERED.

THE general position, which I endeavoured to support in the last lecture, was this, that the apostles, being native Jews, and having the impressions and habits of thinking, which pious Jews would necessarily derive from a familiar acquaintance with the rights and usages inculcated in their sacred writings, and with the representations there made respecting the Divine conduct towards parents and children, must have understood their commission to baptise proselytes, as intended to include children with their parents.

The mode of reasoning, which has been pursued, must, I think, be satisfactory. Its conclusiveness rests wholly on a principle of interpretation, which is acknowledged to be of the first importance—namely, that we should place ourselves, as far as possible, in the circumstances of those who wrote the Scriptures, and of those to whom they were addressed, and in this way endeavour to ascertain

the meaning of what was written. From ecclesiastical history we can derive a very conclusive argument, that the apostles did in fact understand the institution of baptism, as intended for believers and *their children.* But why did they understand it in this manner? I answer, that without the supposition of any direct and explicit instruction on the subject from Christ, or from the Holy Spirit, there were reasons, in the circumstances in which the apostles were placed, sufficient to satisfy them, that such was the design of the institution. Take the New Testament just as it is, and consider what instructions Christ gave his apostles in regard to baptism, particularly his final commission to them *to go and proselyte all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* The proper inquiry is not how Greeks and Romans would have understood such a commission; for the apostles were neither Greeks nor Romans, and their Lord who commissioned them, was neither a Greek nor a Roman. Our inquiry is, how such a commission would naturally be understood by those who were, both by birth and education, *Jews;* how it would be understood by those who had derived their opinions and usages from the Jewish Scriptures, and were the willing servants of one who was himself a Jew, and the King of the Jews? To me it appears evident, that the circumstances of the case, taken together, must have had a decisive influence in favour of the baptism of infants. For it was a well known fact, that the seal of God's gracious covenant had, from Abraham to that time, been applied to children. And this applica-

tion of it was manifestly grounded on a permanent, unchangeable principle—that is, *the natural relation between parents and children.* The mark or seal which was appointed to be put upon God's people under the reign of Christ, was of the same general import with the one previously used. In this view, therefore, there was the same apparent reason for applying it to the children of God's people then, as before. As to its *form*, the sign was changed; but as to its *import*, it was the same. The relation of good men to God, which was marked by this sign, was the same; and the relation of their children to them was the same. How, then, could the apostles have doubted that children were to be treated in the same manner? With their impressions and their usages; with their sacred regard to the principles established by the Scriptures, and by the Divine administration; particularly, with their habit of looking upon children as being, by God's appointment, closely united to their parents in respect to character, and privileges, and prospect of happiness; they must, as it seems to me, have understood the command of Christ to baptize Christian proselytes, as extending to their children also. Had the promise of God, "*I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed,*" or had the circumcision of the children of God's people in connexion with that promise, rested on any relation or principle, which appertained to the Patriarchal or Jewish dispensation in distinction from the Christian,—the apostles, placed at the commencement of the Christian dispensation, and instructed, as they were, in regard to its nature, would have been satisfied of course, that children

were no longer to be marked with the seal of God's covenant, or to be consecrated to him by any religious rite. But children's being comprehended with their parents in the promise of God, and their receiving the same mark of his covenant mercy and of consecration to him with their parents, all plainly rested upon principles which were *universal* and *immutable*, and which were to have as much prominence and influence under the reign of Christ, as before.

We have seen, too, that the reasoning in this case is analogous to the reasoning, commonly relied upon, in relation to the Sabbath. The reason of a Sabbath day lies in the nature of man, and in his relation to God, and so is *immutable*. Consequently, the fourth command, however changed as to form or circumstances, must continue as to *substance*. There must be *a sacred day*. Its becoming a Christian institution, and its being observed on the first day of the week, instead of the seventh, alters not the substance of the fourth command, nor the obligation of Christians to obey it. In the same manner, the reason for *infant consecration* lies in the nature and importance of the relation existing between children and their parents, and the relation of both to God, and so must be the same in all ages. This relation is as obvious and important, and as worthy of being marked by a religious rite *now*, as *formerly*. The sign of consecration* now is *baptism;* and all the reasons in the case conspire to favour the application of it to children. Thus, we

* See Note B. [J. M.]

apprehend, the subject must have presented itself to the minds of the apostles and first Christians.

The view which we have adopted on this subject, agrees best with the common method of understanding a *charter*, securing to any society of men the enjoyment of privileges. Such a charter is, by common consent, to be understood in the largest sense it will bear. Suppose the grant of privileges to a society is made in general terms; that is, neither the individuals nor classes of men belonging to the society are specified. Now, he who is entrusted with the execution of the charter in the bestowment of the privileges granted, is bound to bestow them on all who can fairly be considered as belonging to the society. And if any one should object to the bestowment of the chartered privileges on any individuals fairly comprehended within the society, it would be incumbent on him to show that those individuals were *expressly excepted* in the terms of the grant. Especially would it be proper to give this wide construction to the grant, if it were well known, that a previons grant, of the same nature, had *expressly required* this extensive application of its privileges. And it would be a stronger reason still for understanding the charter in such a sense, if the charter itself were evidently nothing more than the modification, as to outward form, of a previous charter, which was more particular, and which, in the most explicit terms, secured its privileges to those, whose title is now called in question. In such a case, it would aid us much in determining the extent of meaning to be put upon the more general terms of the charter in its present form, to inquire how

it was with the charter when first given. And if, on examination, it is found that it was the will of the prince, that the privileges originally granted, should be thus extensively applied; we should be satisfied at once that the privileges of the charter in its present form, were meant to be applied to an equal extent—*unless there was an express limitation.* And we should feel this satisfaction in the highest possible degree, if it appeared that the prince made the alteration in the form of the original charter, *with the declared design of carrying its privileges to a larger extent.*

To make the principle I have laid down perfectly intelligible and satisfactory, suppose the following case. In a time of sudden invasion, a king publishes a decree, that those, who serve faithfully in the present war, shall during life be entitled, they and their children, to the instructions of the public teachers of learning and religion, and to the attention of authorised physicians, at the public expense. Children are specified, and so no doubt can exist as to the extent of privileges secured by the decree. Some years after, another war takes place. The king, gratified with the results of the former measure, again publishes his decree, and sends it forth to the more distant parts of his empire, securing the same privileges to those who serve faithfully in this war. But the decree in its present form, contains no distinct mention of children. During the war the king dies. Afterwards the question arises, whether the decree, which he last published, is to be understood as extending the privileges specified to the *children* of those who served in the war. On the negative, it is said, the

children are not expressly named in the decree; and very young children are not capable of enjoying all the privileges specified. On the other side it is said, that in the original decree, published for the very same purpose on a former occasion, children were expressly named, and that their enjoying these privileges was never a subject of complaint with any portion of the community; that there is the same reason for extending the privileges to children now, as there was before; and that they are as capable of being benefited by them. And it is urged finally, that it was the well-known intention of the king, in this case, to offer greater privileges, and to hold up higher inducements to public service, than on the former occasion. The question is, how the decree, published in the last case, ought to be construed. And I am persuaded, the united sentence of the community would be, that it was the will of the king in the last case, as well as in the former, to extend the privileges specified in the decree, to the *children* of those who were the objects of the royal favour.

This construction of a decree or charter, securing privileges to a particular description of men, and this method of arriving at the knowledge of what was the intention of the king, cannot be deemed otherwise than just and satisfactory. And who, let me ask, would so dishonour a king of a generous heart, as to attempt to take away from the children of his faithful servants, any of those privileges, which had, by his express direction, been before conferred upon them in the same circumstances?

Now all the considerations, which would lead us to give such a construction to the decree or charter here supposed, exist in relation to the subject of infant baptism. Our inquiry is, whether the language, employed in Christ's commission to baptize, would naturally be understood by his apostles, as extending to the children of believers? In answer to this inquiry, I have endeavoured to make it appear, that all the circumstances of the case, which can be supposed to have had any influence upon the minds of the apostles, were in favour of extending baptism to children, and that, before they could understand their commission in any other manner, they must have ceased to be children of Abraham, and must have erased from their minds all the impressions which had been made upon them by the word and providence of God.

The want of *qualifications* in children is a subject which may deserve particular consideration. It is sufficient, however, for our present purpose, to say, that a grant of privileges is often made to children *prospectively and conditionally.* In such cases, some mark or seal of those privileges, such as may be applied to children, is always deemed proper; and as to the privileges themselves, it is the common understanding, that they belong to children as soon as they have become capable of enjoying them, and have complied with the conditions on which they are granted.*

* In baptism, the great privilege represented is not entirely *prospective.* The Holy Spirit, represented by the water used, is already provided for the child, is already taking an interest in the child, and has already been blessing the child. [J. M.]

Thus far we have considered merely those circumstances which would be likely to influence the apostles in their understanding of the meaning of their commission. The reasoning has proceeded independently of the consideration of any other means, which they might have had, of knowing what was the will of their Lord.

But we shall not stop here, but shall proceed to inquire, whether there was any thing in the previous instructions of Christ, which could have contributed to satisfy the apostles in what light he regarded the children of his people, and in what manner he would have them treated; or which could have had any influence on their minds in regard to the subject before us.

Here it is not to be concealed, that all the evidence we can have is circumstantial, or by way of inference. But such evidence, it will be remembered, is often as satisfactory as any other.

The first passage I shall introduce in regard to this subject is Matt. xix. 13, 14. "Then were brought to Jesus little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them." The same thing is related in nearly the same manner by Mark, x. 13, 14, and and by Luke, xviii. 15, 16. In Luke βρεφη is used, which denotes *young children—infants*. The kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, as Mark and Luke have it, unquestionably signifies here, as it generally does in the Evangelists, *the Chris-*

*tian church, or the kingdom of grace** which Christ set up in the world, in distinction from the society of God's people, as it existed under the former dispensation. It must have been intended to point out a society or kingdom in distinction from that, because it was often spoken of by Christ, as what was to come, or was about to be established.

That part of this passage which relates more directly to our subject, is the declaration at the close: *των γαρ τοιουτων εστιν ἡ βασιλεια των ουρανων*, —"for to such the kingdom of heaven belongs;" Christ's church or kingdom* is theirs; they have a right to its blessings.

The common rendering of the phrase is, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven;" which is commonly understood to mean, that the kingdom of heaven *consists*, or *is made up* of such. But the rendering which I have given, and which I think more exactly agreeable to the sense of the original, is the same as is given to a similar phrase in Matt. v. 3, 10,—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, *ὁτι αυτων εστιν ἡ βασιλεια των ουρανων*, for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven;" the kingdom of heaven *belongs to* them; they have a right to it. The same, ver. 10, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, *ὁτι αυτων εστιν ἡ βασιλεια των ουρανων*, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"—it belongs to them.

The whole verse, then, will stand thus: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for to such the kingdom of heaven belongs;" they are entitled to its privileges and blessings.

* See Note C. [J. M.]

There are two ways of interpreting this declaration. According to one of them, the declaration relates to those who *resemble little children;* that is, to those who are *docile*, and *free from ambition and malice.* They who adopt this sense of the passage, consider the declaration, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," as signifying, that the kingdom of heaven belongs, not to little children themselves, but to those who are *like* them—to real Christians.

The principal arguments in favour of this interpretaton are the following:—

1. It may be said, this interpretation is suggested by the passages in which Christ professedly undertakes to show what character his disciples must possess, from the obvious qualities of a little child, as in Matt. xviii. 1—6. The disciples, influenced by feelings of ambition, inquired, *who was the greatest in Christ's kingdom.* "Christ called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become *as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the midst of the sea." Here the phrase, παιδιον τοιουτον, *such a child*, is used to signify one who resembles a child; that is, a disciple of Christ—one who believes in Christ, as appears from the next verse.

When, therefore, Christ says, in the passage under consideration, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," or, to such, that is, to such little children, the kingdom of heaven belongs, he must [it is thought]* evidently mean the same as in the place where he speaks expressly of those little ones who believe.

2. This interpretation of the passage, it is thought, may be defended by what directly follows in the context, as Mark and Luke have it. According to these evangelists, after Christ says, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," he immediately adds, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein." This is evidently intended to point out the character of his disciples; and why should not the declaration, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," be understood as referring to the same? So Kuinoel understands it: "Τοιουτοι sunt infantibus similes,"—"*Such*, are those who resemble little children;" and he argues in favour of this sense of the passage by what Christ says immediately after—"whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein."

3. There is a general reason for giving the passage this sense, which, though I have not seen it distinctly mentioned by any author, seems to me deserving of particular consideration. I refer to the fact that Christ so often took pains to instruct the people as to the nature of his kingdom, and the necessary qualifications of those who should be admitted to enjoy its blessings, and

* These words are inserted by me. [J. M.]

insisted upon the pre-eminent importance of their being *like a little child*, or their being free from pride and malice, and possessing a humble, teachable disposition. Now, it would seem that a declaration of Christ, showing to whom his kingdom belongs, would most naturally be intended to refer to the character of true disciples.

These, so far as I know, are the chief reasons which have been, or can be urged in favour of this sense of the passage.

But there are several considerations of no small weight, against this interpretation, and in favour of that which makes the phrase, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," or, "to such the kingdom of heaven belongs," relate to *the children themselves*, and to *other children like them.*

The first reason I shall mention is, that τοιουτος, the same as *talis* in Latin, properly signifies the nature or quality of the thing to which it is applied, and not the resemblance which something else bears to it. Accordingly, the real import of των γαρ τοιουτων εστιν ἡ βασιλεια των ουρανων, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," is the same as, "of these, and such as these, is the kingdom of heaven," including, of course, *the children themselves*, as having a right to the blessings of Christ's kingdom. This sense of the word, which is a matter of great consequence, is easily illustrated from the current use of the word, in similar circumstances, in the New Testament. Matt. ix. 8, "The multitude glorified God, who had given *such power* to men;"—εξουσιαν τοιαυτην, "power of such a kind;" this very power, which was so great and glorious, being intended. Mark iv. 33,

"With many such parables spake he unto them;" —Τοιαυταις παραβολαις, "with these parables, and many others of like kind,"—most surely including the parables which had just been related. Mark vi. 2, "that such mighty works are wrought by his hands;"—δυναμεις τοιαυται, the very miracles referred to, which were of such a remarkable kind. Luke ix. 9, "Who is this of whom I hear such things?" — τοιαυτα, "these things," or rather, things of such a nature as these. Luke xiii. 2, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?"—τοιαυτα, the things which had just been mentioned, which were of so remarkable a nature. John ix. 16, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?"—τοιαυτα σημεια, miracles of so remarkable a nature as those just mentioned. So in several passages in Romans, τοιαυτα signifies *the very things just before mentioned*, which were so manifestly and so highly criminal.* This appears to be the sense of τοιουτος,† except when it is employed in a peculiar, unusual manner. Accordingly, the phrase, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," must mean, *of such children as these*, the very children that were brought to Christ being included. The other sense of των τοιουτων, namely, *of those who are like these children* is the kingdom of heaven—that is, of *docile, humble men*, children themselves not being included, would be altogether an exception from the pre-

* See Rom. i. 32; ii. 2, 3. [J. M.]

† See still more striking examples of this import of τοιουτος in John iv. 23; 2 Cor. xii. 2. [J. M.]

vailing sense, and so ought not to be adopted, without very imperious reasons.

I readily allow that παιδιον τοιουτον, in Matt. xviii. 5, may at first view appear to favour the other interpretation; but a careful attention to all the circumstances will lead, I think, to a different conclusion. "Jesus set a child in the midst of his disciples, and said, Except ye be converted, and become *as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Thus he directed the attention of those around him to the character of a true disciple; he represented a disciple, a member of his kingdom, as *like a little child*, or *as being a child in disposition;* so that, when in the next verse he says, "whosoever shall receive *one such child*," the way was prepared for understanding him to mean, *a person of a lowly disposition*, a true disciple. A person of this character had been made the subject of discourse —the subject on which the thoughts of all were fixed. In these circumstances, παιδιον τοιουτον must of course have been taken to mean, *a person of a childlike disposition*; and we find, in verse 6, ἑνα των μικρων, *one of these little ones*, is expressly made to signify *one who believes in Christ.*

There is, then, an obvious difference between the two passages. In one, the attention is fixed upon the character of a Christian, as the principal subject. In consequence of the method which was taken to illustrate his character, it became perfectly natural to call him "a child," "a little child:" παιδιον τοιουτον, thus introduced, must have been understood to signify, *a disciple of Christ.* But in the other passage, the subject

presented before the mind was, *the little children themselves.* *They* were brought to Christ for his blessing; upon them the attention of all was fixed; to them the objection of the disciples related; and surely what Christ said in the way of reply to that objection, must also have related to them. We rest, then, on a general principle, namely, that words are to be taken in their literal sense, unless there is a plain and satisfactory reason for taking them in a metaphorical sense. In Matt. xviii. 5, there is such a reason; in Matt. xix. 14, there is not.

My second reason in favour of the interpretation we are now considering, is, that the declaration, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," is expressly made the *reason* for suffering *little children themselves* to come to him. "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, *των γαρ τοιουτων*, *for* of such is the kingdom of heaven." Both in the New Testament and in classic authors, *γαρ* is commonly used to denote the reason of what has been asserted or implied. The declaration, "*for* of such is the kingdom of heaven," according to the common acceptation of the words, must then be understood to be the *reason* for suffering the little children themselves to come to him. But how could this be a reason for suffering the little children to come to Christ, if it were not *they* that belonged to his kingdom, but certain others who resembled them? When, however, I say that their belonging to the kingdom of heaven is given as the reason why they should be suffered to come to Christ, I do not rely merely on the causative conjunction *γαρ*, which, though it is commonly used in this sense,

is sometimes used in a different sense: for even if this conjunction were omitted, the very collocation of the words, and the obvious relation of the ideas contained in the former and in the latter part of the sentence, would clearly suggest, that the fact last mentioned was meant to be given as the reason of what was before said. The disciples forbid little children to come to Christ: he rebukes them, and says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me; . . of such is the kingdom of heaven." Now who could tell *why* this last should be said, if not meant to be a reason for suffering the little children to come? And it is to be remembered that the little children did come, and that they came, too, in consequence of that very direction which Christ gave respecting them, and which was accompanied with such a reason.*

These two considerations, namely, the prevailing use of the word τοιουτων, and the assigning of the last circumstance mentioned in the sentence, as the reason of the direction just before given, are of great weight, being the prominent considerations both of a philological and logical nature, which relate to the interpretation of the text.

* "His reasoning is not—of persons *resembling* such [viz. little children] in temper and disposition, is the kingdom made up; for this, as has already been hinted, would not warrant the conclusion drawn, namely, that children ought not to be hindered from being brought to him, in order to be blessed; for on the same principle he might have said, 'Suffer doves and lambs to be brought unto me, to be blessed, for of persons resembling such is the kingdom of God made up.' Now this would prove too much, consequently it proves nothing."—Dr. Russell, *Infant Salvation*, p. 105, 2nd edit. [J. M.]

And if the last interpretation given is not the right one, then the word τοιουτων is not here used in its common sense, and the reason assigned by Christ for suffering the little children to come to him, seems to have no weight or pertinence.

Now considering that this interpretation of the text is supported by such considerations, we certainly ought not to reject it, and to adopt another, without very strong and conclusive reasons. But do such reasons exist?

Let us first inquire, whether there is anything in *the nature of the case*, which is conclusive against this interpretation. Is the kingdom of heaven, or the Christian church * such, as would make it inconsistent to suppose that it belongs to children? I answer in the negative; and the propriety of this answer may be made to appear in two ways. First, Christ's kingdom may belong to little children, or they may be members of it, in the highest sense. They may have been designated as heirs of salvation, and the grace of God may have sealed them for heaven. No one can show that the actual salvation of little children is impossible, or improbable.

But, secondly, without supposing that all children, or even all the children of believers, are actually members of Christ's kingdom in the highest sense, we may consider them as belonging to it, and entitled to its privileges, in a lower, though a very important sense. We may consider them as sustaining a very near relation to their own parents, and through them to the church. They

* See Note C. [J. M.]

may have a right to the privileges of the church, somewhat as children may have a right to the privileges of a particular civil community, of which their parents are members. The children of pious parents may have such a connexion with the church, as will secure to them special advantages for moral improvement, and a prospect specially favourable to their final salvation. It may be the design of God, that the Christian religion should be transmitted from one generation to another, and perpetuated in the world, generally, by the pious education of those who are the children of the church, rendered successful by the divine blessing.

Now this relation of children to the church, which I consider to be a matter of fact, is of vast importance to the interests of religion; and resulting, as it evidently does, from the constitution of human beings, and the appointment of God respecting his kingdom, it is deserving of special notice. Such notice Christ seems to have given it in the passage under consideration. According to the views which have now been suggested, this passage may be paraphrased thus:—These little children, whom you would hinder from being brought to me for my blessing, are objects of my kindest regard. They, and such as they, stand in a near relation to my church. The kingdom, which I am setting up, is not to exclude or overlook them, but to embrace and cherish them. Peculiar favour was shown to children under the former dispensation; think not that less is to be shown them under my reign. Look not upon them, therefore, with feelings of indifference; strive not to deprive them of my blessing; but

suffer them to come unto me, for to such children the privileges of my kingdom belong.

My conclusion is, that there is nothing in the nature of the case, which makes it impossible or inconsistent that little children should, in some important sense, hold a relation to the church, and that the privileges of Christ's kingdom should belong to them; there is nothing in the nature of the case, which can furnish any valid objection against that interpretation of the text, which I have undertaken to support.

Secondly.—Is there any conclusive objection against this interpretation from the other passage referred to, that is, Matt. xviii. 1—6, in which Christ professedly makes use of a little child to inculcate upon his disciples the importance of humility? There can, I think, be no such objection, because the words of Christ recorded here were spoken on an occasion, and for a purpose, entirely different from the passage we have been examining. There, little children were brought to Christ. His disciples wished to exclude them. But Christ disapproved of their conduct, and gave them a reason why the children should be permitted to come; and the reason was, that *to such as they his kingdom belonged.* But in Matt. xviii. 1—6, the disciples manifested the workings of ambition; and Christ, to teach them humility, took a little child, and set him before them, and told them that they must become unambitious, humble, like that child, or they could not be admitted into his kingdom. In this place, the character required of his disciples was the object and the only object Christ had in view. He brought forward a little child *merely*

to *illustrate* that character. In the other place, *the children themselves* were the objects of attention, and the evident design of Christ was to show how he regarded *them*, and, consequently, how he would have them regarded and treated by his disciples. Now because on one occasion, it was the object of Christ in all that he said to inculcate humility upon his followers, we cannot surely infer, that this and this only was his object on another occasion, which was itself, and in all its circumstances, different.

But, thirdly—it is said, and this is the last and the greatest difficulty I shall attempt to remove, that on the very occasion, on which Christ declared respecting little children, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," and immediately after he had declared this, he inculcated the same lesson of humility, and in nearly the same way, as on the other occasion. See Mark x. 15. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ὡς παιδιον,* shall not enter therein."

My answer is, that Christ was accustomed to make use of all the means which were at hand, to inculcate duty upon his disciples, especially the duty of being humble; and that, after he had shown his affection for the little children who were brought to him, and had declared that the privileges of his kingdom belonged to them, it was perfectly according to his usual manner, to

* That is, "as a little child *receives it*," viz. the kingdom of God. It is assumed by our Saviour that the kingdom of God belongs to the little child. [J. M.]

introduce another subject, and, by means of the lovely children, who were then before him, and who were entitled to such consideration, to teach his disciples what disposition they must possess. It was clearly *another subject*, though introduced on the occasion of the children's being brought to him. Jesus chose that such an occasion should not pass without profit to his disciples, whom he doubtless saw to be in special need of the instruction then given them.

There is also a general consideration which was mentioned in the former lecture, and which should not be overlooked in the interpretation of the text now before us, and which is of special use in the interpretation of many a doubtful passage in the Evangelists, and in the Epistles—namely, *that it was addressed to Jews.* We have already considered what influence this circumstance must have had on the manner in which the apostles would understand the commission they received to proselyte and baptize. Why should we suppose it had less influence here? The Jews were accustomed to a dispensation, under which the children of God's people were considered and treated as belonging to their sacred community, and as entitled to inherit its blessings. Their Scriptures plainly required that they should be treated in this manner. But on the particular occasion now referred to, the disciples seem to have forgotten this principle. They treated the little children who were brought to Christ, as though it had escaped their recollection, that children were the objects of God's favour, and that they sustained so high a relation

to the society of his people. Had there not been something faulty in the feelings of the disciples, they would not have done such a thing as to forbid the children to be brought to Christ for his blessing; and, most certainly, they would not have incurred his rebuke. The answer of Christ was perfectly suited to correct their mistake, and to teach them what, as the posterity of Abraham, they would easily understand—namely, *that children were to have the same relation to the church of God, under the Christian dispensation, as before.* For I cannot but insist upon it, that, as the disciples in that case were chargeable with overlooking the importance of little children, and treating them with a culpable indifference—at least, with not manifesting a suitable regard for them—it is perfectly natural to understand what Christ said in reply, as having been intended to correct their mistake, and to show in what light children were to be regarded under his reign.

There is still one more consideration I wish to exhibit, which is, that the sense I have given to the passage in Matt. may receive support from what St. Paul says respecting children, 1 Cor. vii. 14: "Else were your children *unclean*, but now they are *holy*." This text will be considered more particularly in the next lecture. At present, my object is simply to show that, being understood according to the most respectable and critical commentators, it has an exact correspondence with my interpretation of the text in Matt. xix. 14.

"Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy;" νυν δε ἁγια εστιν. According to Schleusner, this means, *but now are they held as*

*members of the Christian church;** "Jam vero habentur membra ecclesiæ Christianæ." At the head of the article under which this text is quoted, he says, *He is called holy, who is to be numbered with the society of Christians.* Wahl, referring to this place, says, "*it is spoken of one who is in any way connected with Christians, and therefore to be reckoned among them.*" According to these and other distinguished authors, the apostle Paul, who so perfectly understood the nature and circumstances of the Christian dispensation, represented children, as those who were to be numbered with the society of Christians, and to be regarded as holding a place in the Christian church,† even when only one of their parents was a believer. This must have involved the general principle, that the children of believers were considered as belonging to the Messiah's kingdom or the Christian church.‡ And this is the same thing as that which I have understood to be taught by the words of Christ, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." The declaration of Christ, and that of the apostle, had relation to the same subject. They were both intended to show in what light the children of believers were to be regarded. This comparison of the two texts affords additional satisfaction as to the true meaning of each.

* I would rather say, "but now are they separated from the children of the world, and consecrated to God." The children of the world were unclean; i. e. they were consecrated to idols. [J. M.]

† Instead of "the Christian church," I would say, "the kingdom of God." [J. M.]

‡ See Note C. [J. M.]

I have thus gone through with an examination of the remarkable passage in Matt. xix. 14, and, without relying on the opinions of others, have carefully attended to those considerations on both sides, which appeared to be of particular consequence to a right interpretation. I would not suffer myself to feel any undue confidence in my own opinion on such a subject as this; and I would certainly treat with great respect those who adopt a different opinion. Having endeavoured impartially to exhibit whatever appertains to a fair discussion of the subject, I very cheerfully refer the whole to the judgment of enlightened and candid men.

The most respectable authors are divided. Accordingly to Rosenmüller and Kuinoel, Christ taught merely that his disciples must resemble little children in humility and gentleness, and not that children themselves belonged to his kingdom. But many English writers defend with various arguments the sense which I have given. And I find Storr and Flatt on the same side. And they do not merely give their *opinion*, although that would be entitled to great respect; but what is better, they give a *reason* for their opinion; and that reason is the very one, to which I have attached the highest importance in the preceding discussion. The passage relating to this text is the following." * "Των γαρ τοιουτων εστιν ἡ βασιλεια των ουρανων, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. *Children must have been included in the word, such;* because the proposition, the kingdom of

* See Storr's Bib. Theol. Book 3. § 68.

heaven belongs to *humble adults,—to those who have as little pride as children,* would be no reason why *children* should not be prevented from coming to Jesus."

Now for the application of this passage, thus interpreted, to the subject in hand. The general inquiry is, in what way the apostles must have understood the commission which Christ gave them, to *proselyte* and *baptize* all nations; particularly, whether they would understand the children of proselytes to be included. After attending to various circumstances directly pertaining to the subject, and finding what reason we have to think that the apostles must have understood the commission to baptize as extending to the children of believers, we proceeded to inquire, whether Christ, the author of the new dispensation, had previously given any instructions which could have an influence on their minds, in regard to this subject; particularly whether he had said any thing to show in what light he regarded little children. We fixed on the passage in Matt. xix. 14, as answering this inquiry; that is, as showing that the children of God's people were considered as belonging to his church, or kingdom,* just as they had belonged to the community of his people under the former dispensation. Formerly, they were considered a holy seed, consecrated to God, and blessed with special privileges, in consequence of being the children of his people. Christ here seems to teach that they were to be considered in the same light, and treated in the same manner,

* See Note C. [J. M.]

under his reign. When, therefore, the apostles received a commission to proselyte and baptize all nations, they had this special reason for understanding it as extending to children, that Christ himself had taught them before, that children were to belong to *his* kingdom, just as they had belonged to the society of God's people under the former economy. And if, wherever the Christian religion should be propagated, and the kingdom of Christ established, the children of believers were, according to his instructions, to be included, with their parents, in that kingdom, or to be viewed as belonging to the society of the disciples—there could be no doubt that they were to receive the *mark* of discipleship.* If they were to be regarded as holy, that is, consecrated to God,—they were undoubtedly to receive the *sign* of consecration.

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of closing this lecture with a passage from Knapp's Theology, under the head of "Infant Baptism," where he shows that he gave the same sense to the text in Matt. xix. 14, and reasoned from it in the same manner as I have done.

"That infant baptism, considered as a solemn rite of consecration, cannot be opposed to the design and will of Christ, may be concluded from his own declaration, Matt. xviii. 14, '*Suffer* little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, *των γαρ τοιουτων εστιν ἡ βασιλεια του θεου*; *for of such is the kingdom of God.*' This is indeed no com-

* Instead of "discipleship," I would say, "God's favour." [J. M.]

mand for infant baptism; but if children can and should have a share in the Christian church, and in all Christian privileges, βασιλεια του θεου, it cannot be improper to introduce them into the Christian church by this solemn rite of initiation. And if, according to the design of Christ, children, from their earliest youth up, are to have a share in the rites and privileges of Christians, it must also be agreeable to his will solemnly to introduce them, by this rite of consecration, into the nursery of his disciples. Compare 1 Cor. vii. 14."

LECTURE V.

WHETHER THERE WAS ANY THING IN THE CONDUCT OF THE APOSTLES, OR ANY DECLARATION IN THEIR WRITINGS TO AID US IN DETERMINING HOW THEY UNDERSTOOD THEIR COMMISSION.—HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM.—1 COR. VII. 14.

WE have already inquired, whether there was any thing in the particular instructions of Christ to his apostles, previous to the final commission he gave them, which would naturally lead them to understand that commission, as intended to include infant children. We shall now inquire, whether we can be assisted in determining how they understood that commission, by any thing in the conduct of the apostles while executing their commision, or any declaration made in their writings.

The mode of reasoning which I have adopted, does not require, and does not lead us to expect any thing like a *positive declaration*, that they baptized infants, or considered them proper subjects of baptism. For if it was so, that the apostles and first Christians had a united and perfect persuasion, that children were to hold a place in the *Christian* community, similar to what they had held in the community of God's people before, and that they were to receive the new mark of special relation to God, as they had received the old; then there was no more occasion for the apostles

to mention the fact that children were *baptized*, than there was for Joshua, and Samuel, and all the writers of the history contained in the Old Testament, to mention at every period, that children eight days old were *circumcised*. And the case might be exactly so now. Pædobaptist ministers or missionaries might write a history of their ministry, and the success attending it, for many years, and yet say nothing expressly as to the baptism of children. But we should consider such an omission as this, to be no proof that children were not baptized. For it would be obvious, that such ministers might be in circumstances, which would render it quite unnecessary for them to make any express mention of infant baptism. It might be that no one acquainted with them, would have the least doubt respecting their practice. At the present day, indeed, when Christians every where are divided on this subject, such silence might not be what we should look for. But were all Christians united in the practice of infant baptism, as we apprehend the primitive Christians were, there might be no occasion whatever to make particular mention of it. In all such cases, we should understand the practice of ministers to be according to what we knew of their opinions. If they were pædobaptists, we should have no doubt of their being in the practice of baptizing children, although in some brief account of their ministry, they should say nothing about such a practice.

The evidence, to which I now invite your attention, is incidental, or circumstantial. But it is not on that account the less worthy of consideration. Indeed it cannot be denied, that an undesigned

reference or allusion to the practice of infant baptism, or the declaration of some principle or fact implying it, may afford evidence as satisfactory, as a direct assertion of the apostles.

After these introductory remarks, let us proceed to the inquiry above stated. My position is, that, although there is no passage in the Acts of the apostles, or in the epistles, which expressly declares it, as a historical fact, that the apostles did baptize children, or which directly affirms that they understood their commission to baptize, as extending to children; there are passages which imply this, and which have a much more natural and consistent sense, on the supposition that infant baptism was the apostolic practice, than on the contrary supposition. I shall first refer to the passages which speak of the baptism of *households*, or *families*. It is said of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14, 15, that the Lord opened her heart to attend to the instructions of Paul, and that *she* was baptized, and her *household*. And in the same chapter, ver. 33, we are told that the gaolor was baptized, *he* and *all his*—that is, *all who belonged to him*, *straightway*, or immediately. And Paul says, 1 Cor. i. 16, "I baptized the *household* of Stephanas." *

My reasoning from such passages is this. The word οικια, rendered house, or household, had been commonly used to comprise children with their parents much in the same manner as the word

* See on these passages much important reasoning, in "Facts and Evidencies on the subject of Baptism, by the editor of Calmet's dictionary of the Holy Bible." [J. M.]

family, or household, is used now. And it is well known, that it had been the manner of the people of God, to consider and treat their families, as consecrated to God, and intimately associated with them in the concerns of religion. As, therefore, we find that the apostles, who were accustomed to the language of the Old Testament, and to the practice there enjoined, speak familiarly of their baptizing *households*, or *families*—it is no more than reasonable to suppose, that those families, generally contained children, and that those children were baptized. And if this was the case, then the apostles must have understood their commission, as including children. It will be observed, that whenever the apostles speak of baptizing households, they speak of it without any restriction. They do not say that *Lydia* was baptized, and *those of her family who believed;* or that the gaolor was baptized, and as many of those who belonged to him as believed. There is no such limitation as this. Lydia was baptized, and her family; the gaolor was baptized and all his. And considering how very succinct the history of baptisms is, the number of *household-baptisms* particularly mentioned, must be allowed to be considerable, and to be quite a noticeable circumstance in that history. Now is this a circumstance ever to be met with in histories, written by those ministers who do not baptize infants? For them to speak familiarly, and without restriction or explanation, of baptizing *families*, would be inconsistent with their views, and their practice. As to the instances mentioned in the New Testament of the baptism of families, who has any right to say,

that those families contained none but *adults*, and none but adult *believers?* Who can think this in any degree probable?

To show still more clearly what is the natural import of the account given in the New Testament of *family baptisms*, suppose the following case:—Two missionaries have for a number of years, been successfully labouring for the conversion of a particular tribe of savages in the wilderness of America. We have heard of their labours, and of their success, and have rejoiced in it; but have never learned, and have never to this day inquired, whether they practised infant baptism or not. For special reasons, this now becomes a subject of inquiry; and the only means of information which we have at hand is a brief history which those missionaries have published of their labours. In that history, which is now subjected to a careful examination, we find that they speak of several instances, in which individuals embraced Christianity, and received baptism. And they inform us, that at such a time they baptized one of the chiefs, and his *family;* and that, at another time, they baptized such a man, and *all his;* and again, another man and his *household.* This is all the information they give. They mention, without explanation or restriction, the baptism of several persons, and their *households*, and so make *family-baptisms* a noticeable circumstance in the history of their mission. Would not such a circumstance lead us to think it altogether probable, that they practised infant baptism? Be sure, it might be said, that they do not expressly mention the baptism of little children, and that all who belonged to those

families may have been *adults*, and adult *believers*. This, I admit, would be possible; but would it be *probable?* Would those who do not baptize children, be likely to speak in this manner? Should we not think it very singular, to find accounts of *family-baptisms* in a history of baptist missions.

The circumstance under consideration, it is readily conceded, cannot be made a decisive argument. But does not the account, which the apostles give of the baptism of *households*, best agree with the supposition, that they were in the practice of baptizing children? If we admit that they understood children to be proper subjects of baptism, as they had before been of circumcision, such an account is just what we should expect—otherwise, not.

I have already referred to the text, 1 Cor. vii. 14, as affording collateral support to the construction which was given to Matt. xix. 14. I propose now to give this text a more particular examination. After suggesting with perfect freedom the thoughts which have occurred to me respecting the sense of this passage, I shall most cheerfully leave you to adopt such a conclusion, as shall appear to you most consistent and just.

There are two interpretations of the text, which deserve special notice. The first I shall mention is that of Dr. Gill, a very distinguished antipædobaptist writer, who expresses what he understands to be the meaning of the text in the following paraphrase:—The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean;

but now are they holy. The parties spoken of "are duly, rightly, and legally *espoused* to each other; otherwise, that is, if they are not truly married to each other, the children must be spurious, and not legitimate: else were your children unclean, but now are they holy; that is, if the marriage contracted between them was not valid, and if, since the conversion of one of them, it can never be thought to be good; then the children begotten and born, either when both were infidels, or since one of them was converted, must be unlawfully begotten, base-born, and not a genuine, legitimate offspring; but as the parents are lawfully married, the children born of them are in a civil and legal sense holy—that is, legitimate."

The most powerful argument which has been urged in favour of this interpretation, and one attended with much plausibility is, that it seems, at first view, to agree with the object of the apostle, who directs that a believer should not put away an unbelieving partner; and to make this direction appear just, asserts, as Dr. Gill understands him, that the believing and unbelieving partners are lawfully joined in marriage,—and that, were it not so, their children would be illegitimate; but that, in consequence of the lawfulness of the connexion between the parents, their children are legitimate.

In reply to this, it may be said, that a different sense will agree, to say the least, equally well with the manifest object of the apostle. The very direction, that an unbelieving husband or wife should not be put away by the other party, implies that there is a matrimonial connexion between

them, and that the connexion is lawful. But the apostle wishes to enforce this direction by a proper reason; and the reason he suggests, as I understand it, is this—that the unbelieving husband or wife is sanctified by the believing partner, in such sense that, in consequence of it, their children are separated from heathenism, consecrated to God, and brought into the society of Christians. This was then, and would be now, a consideration of great weight—much greater, I should think, than the *mere legitimacy* of the children. This consideration did indeed presuppose their legitimacy; but it had this important point in addition—namely, that the children were a holy seed, consecrated to God, and entitled to the special privileges of the Christian dispensation. Now, this consideration, as it includes the other, and has so much in addition, must be a more powerful reason to enforce the observance of the direction, than the other, taken by itself. So that, in respect to the design of the apostle, and the reasoning employed, Dr. Gill's interpretation has certainly no advantage over the other.

But there are considerations of great importance, which stand directly against Dr. Gill's construction.

The first is, that it is contrary to the *usus loquendi.* It puts a sense upon the words, ἡγιασται and ἁγια, which is widely different from the prevailing sense; yea, different from the sense which they have in any other passages of Scripture. And Dr. Gill himself does not pretend that either of the words is used in the sense he contends for, in any other text. He does indeed attempt to

support his rendering, by referring to the use of the Hebrew קִדֵּשׁ in the Talmudic books, where it has the sense of *espousing* merely. But Schleusner objects to the argument, and says, "that the notion of espousing, which certain interpreters have attributed to the word ἁγιαζειν, from the use of the word קִדֵּשׁ, in the Talmudic books, is, as any one must see, manifestly foreign to this place." There is not one of the senses of קָדַשׁ, given by Gesenius, and not one of the many senses of ἁγιαζω, given by Schleusner and Wahl, which favours the rendering of Dr. Gill. The same is true of the adjective ἁγια. Schleusner and Wahl give a great variety of senses, but none of them relate to the legitimacy of children. Nor is ακαθαρτος, nor the corresponding Hebrew טָמֵא, ever used to designate a spurious or illegitimate offspring. Good use, then, is entirely against the rendering of Dr. Gill.

Second. Although the advocates of Dr. Gill's interpretation of the text, say much of its perfect correspondence with the object and the reasoning of the apostle, I think the reasoning, or the train of thought, in one important respect, though not mentioned by any writer whom I have consulted, is clearly inconsistent with that interpretation. The apostle says: "Otherwise,"—that is, were it not as I have said, that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband,—"your children would be unclean, but now are they holy." The children are holy, in the sense intended, in consequence of the

influence which the believing wife has upon the unbelieving husband, or the believing husband upon the unbelieving wife. He is sanctified by her, and she by him; and in consequence of this sanctification, whatever it is, the children are holy. Without this sanctification of the unbelieving party by the believing, the children would be unclean. Suppose, now, husband and wife are both unbelievers: the sanctification spoken of, whatever it is, does not exist; of course, the reason, or cause of the holiness of the children does not exist. And if the *cause* of their holiness does not exist, they cannot be holy,—they are unclean. But are they illegitimate? May there not be lawful marriage between a husband and wife who are both unbelievers? Is it necessary, to the lawfulness of marriage, and to the legitimacy of children, that the husband or the wife should have Christian faith? How was it with those who were married and had children while they were heathen? Were their children bastards? Were they ever considered and treated so by the apostles? They certainly would have been considered so, had not their parents been lawfully married. But if lawful marriage may exist, where neither husband nor wife is a Christian, they may surely have legitimate children; but they cannot have children who are holy, in the sense of the apostle—because being holy in that sense is evidently the consequence of an unbelieving father being sanctified by a believing mother, or an unbelieving mother by a believing father. Or the argument may be stated thus: If both parents are unbelievers—if they are both pagans, most

surely their children cannot be considered a *holy seed*, in the sense of the Old Testament or the New. They are ακαθαρτα, *unclean, pagan;* but are they illegitimate? If not—if those who are joined in marriage, though both of them are unbelievers and pagans, may, by the acknowledgment of all, have legitimate children—then, clearly, the faith of one of the parents, and the sanctification of the other, by means of that faith, cannot be necessary in order to the legitimacy of the children. But it is necessary, in order to their being *holy*, in the sense of the apostle; for he says expressly, that were it not for such a sanctification of one parent by the other, the children would be *unclean*, which is the opposite of being *holy*. Thus it becomes manifest that ἁγια and ακαθαρτα cannot be rendered *legitimate* and *illegitimate*, without involving us in inextricable difficulty as to the apostle's reasoning. But this difficulty is avoided by another interpretation, as we shall see in the sequel.

There is no occasion to dwell upon the opinion of those who consider the apostle as speaking of the real conversion of an unbelieving by a believing partner, or of the prospect of such conversion. For although this opinion may seem to derive some support from ver. 16, it does not, on the whole, agree with the statement of the case.

The other sense of the text, which I shall particularly consider, is this: The unbelieving husband, by his voluntary connexion with a believing wife, is, in a manner separated from the heathen, and brought into an alliance with Christians. His being "pleased to dwell with" such a wife,

shows that he is not an outrageous infidel, but that he has some sober reflection, and is willing to be in Christian society. He stands in that relation to his wife in which, as Scripture teaches, he becomes one with her. On account of this near relation, he is to be regarded and treated very differently from what he would be, if no such relation existed. He has been, and is so sanctified—ἡγιασται; his condition relatively, is so affected by his marriage with her, that her living with him will make no difference as to her state, or the privileges she may enjoy; so that she has no occasion to put him away, but may as lawfully and properly continue to dwell with him, as if he were a Christian. Were it not for this—that is, were it not that his state relatively is thus affected by his connexion with her; in other words, were he in all respects to be reckoned among the unsanctified heathen; were he openly and entirely united to their society; were his wife's piety, and her relation to him, a matter of no consideration; and were he to be regarded just as he would be, if he had no connexion at all with God's people,—then indeed his children would be *unclean;* their relation to such a father, if his state were in no way made better by his connexion with a pious wife, would render them *heathen* children, and would exclude them from the peculiar privileges of the children of God's people. But now, as his condition is so altered by his matrimonial connexion with a believing wife—as he is, by that connexion, so sanctified, that he stands well in respect to his domestic state—his children are not to be regarded as *heathen* children, but as a *holy*

seed, a *Christian offspring*, entitled to a place in Christian society, and to the seal* of the Christian economy.

That this interpretation agrees perfectly with the design and reasoning of the apostle, must, I think, appear from what has already been advanced. The chief argument which I shall now urge in its support, is the *usus loquendi*—that is, the sense generally attached, in other parts of Scripture, to the principal words, on which the interpretation must depend; and especially the sense which these words have, when applied to the same subjects. It should be kept in mind, as a matter of great consequence, that the apostle Paul, who wrote the book containing the text under consideration, was by birth and education a *Hebrew;* that he was perfectly familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures; and that, in a very remarkable degree, he transfused the peculiarities of those Scriptures into his own writings. He adopted the phraseology of the Hebrew Scriptures. He wrote in their idiom. Accordingly, it will be of the first importance to notice the peculiar Hebrew sense of the principal words found in the passage before us.

Ακαθαρτος, according to Schleusner, signifies, "that which is prohibited by the Mosaic law, or that from which the people of God were required to separate themselves." Referring to Acts xiv. 28, he says, "A man is there called ακαθαρτος, *unclean*, with whom the Jews thought it unlawful

* I would rather say, "And to the baptismal sign in connexion with the Christian economy." [J. M.]

to have any familiar intercourse." He represents it as often used to denote a pagan, an alien from the worship of the true God, or one who does not belong to the people of God, or to the society of Christians. The text under consideration, he renders thus: "Alioquin et liberi vestri remoti essent a societate Christianorum,"—"Otherwise your children also would be removed from the society of Christians." He quotes the passage in 2 Cor. vi. 17, as exhibiting the same sense of the word: Ακαθαρτον μη ἁπτεσθε—Touch not the *unclean thing;* that is, as the connexion shows, Have no intercourse with pagans. Wahl agrees with Schleusner: "If it were otherwise, it would follow that your children also were not to be considered as belonging to the Christian community." Lightfoot is of the same opinion. He says, that "the words, ακαθαρτα and ἁγια, refer not to legitimacy or illegitimacy, but to the Gentile or Christian state; that the children of Gentiles, or pagans, were by the Jews considered as ακαθαρτα, *unclean*, and the children of the Jews ἁγια, *holy;* and that, in the passage under consideration, the apostle refers to this well-known sense of the word; that his treatment of the subject does not turn on this hinge, whether a child, born of parents one of whom was a Christian and the other a heathen, was a *legitimate* offspring, but whether he was a *Christian* offspring." Whitby presents the argument still more fully:—"The apostle does not say, 'else were your children *bastards*, but now are they *legitimate;*' but 'else were they *unclean*,' that is, heathen children, not to be owned as a holy seed, and therefore not to be admitted into

covenant with God, as belonging to his people. That this is the true import of the words ακαθαρτα and ἁγια, will be apparent from the Scriptures, in which the heathen are styled "the unclean," in opposition to the Jews, in covenant with God, and therefore styled, "an holy people." The Jews looked upon all heathens and their offspring, as unclean, by reason of their want of circumcision, the sign of the covenant. Hence, whereas it is said that Joshua circumcised the people, the Septuagint say, περιεκαθαρεν, "he cleansed them." To this sense of the words *unclean* and *holy*, the apostle may here most rationally be supposed to allude, declaring that the seed of holy persons, as Christians are called, are also holy. And though one of the parents be still a heathen, yet is the denomination to be taken from the better, and so their offspring are to be esteemed not as heathens, that is, unclean, but holy, as all Christians by denomination are. So Clemens Alexandrinus infers, saying: "I suppose the seed of those that are holy, is holy, according to that saying of the apostle Paul, 'the wife is sanctified by the husband,' &c."—referring to the passage under consideration. Whitby confutes the other rendering, "Else were your children bastards," by saying—"the word used for bastard, by the apostle, being νοθος, Heb. xii. 8, and the word γνησιος being the proper word for a legitimate offspring,—had the apostle intended such a sense, he would have used the words which, in the Greek writers, are generally used in that sense, and not such words as in the Septuagint and in the Jewish writers, always have a relation to *federal* holiness, or the want of it."

The authors to whom I have referred, and other writers of the highest character as philologists and commentators, are all of one mind as to the sense of the phrase, "now are they holy:" now are they considered as belonging to the Christian community. Wahl says, "it is spoken of one who is in any way connected with Christians, and therefore to be reckoned among them." So also Calvin: "The children of the Jews, because they were made heirs of the covenant, and distinguished from the children of the impious, were called a holy seed; and, for the same reason, the children of Christians, even when only one of the parents is pious, are accounted holy, and, according to the testimony of the apostle, differ from the impure seed of idolaters." He evidently means to give this sense to the text we are considering.* Doederlein alludes to this text as having the same sense; and the late learned and judicious Knapp, in his Theology, refers to the passage in connexion with Matt. xix. 14, as having a relation to infant baptism. Doddridge says, "on the maturest and most impartial consideration of this text, I must judge it to refer to infant baptism. Nothing can be more apparent, than that the word 'holy' signifies persons who might be admitted to partake of the distinguishing rites of God's people." Against supposing that the apostle meant to assert the legitimacy of children, Doddridge urges, that "this is an unscriptural sense of the word, and that the argument will by no means bear it."

It may perhaps be said, by way of objection to

* See his Institutes, Book iv. Chap. 16.

this rendering, that ἡγιασται must have the same general sense with ἅγια; and that, if ἅγια, holy, implies that the children, to whom it was applied, were devoted to God in baptism, and were entitled to special privileges in the Christian community, then ἡγιασται, 'is sanctified,' or 'made holy,' must imply that the unbelieving husband or wife was in like manner devoted to God, and was entitled to the same special privileges.

But to this it may be replied, that it is nothing uncommon for the same word to have a variety of significations, not only in different sentences, but in the same sentence. Instances of this might easily be pointed out in the Scriptures, and in other writings. In all such cases, the obvious nature and circumstances of the subject to which the word is applied, must help us to determine in what particular sense the word is used. Any one, who will consult Johnson's English, or Ainsworth's Latin Dictionary, or Schleusner's Greek Lexicon, may see how different subjects, and the different circumstances of the same subject, constantly vary the signification of the same word, sometimes in small and almost imperceptible degrees, and sometimes in higher degrees. And if the sense of the same word thus varies, surely it can be nothing strange that these two words—one a verb, and the other an adjective—should vary in their signification, when applied to subjects so different as those now referred to; so that our giving somewhat of a different sense to ἡγιασται from what we give to ἅγια, is no valid objection to our interpretation of the text. But after all, it will be seen, that according to this interpretation, the two words,

though the one is a verb, and the other an adjective, have really the same general sense—that is, the sense of being separated, set apart, or made fit for a particular use; and that the difference, so far as there is any, arises from the obvious difference of the subjects. The general notion of being sanctified is first applied to an unconverted heathen, connected in marriage with a Christian; and it is applied in reference to a particular question—that is, whether it is proper and advisable that a Christian should continue to live with an unbelieving partner. Now, when the apostle says, in reference to this question, "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife," it is natural to understand him to speak of a sanctification adapted to the subject under consideration. And a sanctification adapted to that subject would seem to be this: that by his connexion in marriage with a believing wife, he is, in some sort, separated from the society of the heathen—certainly from the familiar intercourse with them which he once had; that on account of the pious woman with whom he is so closely connected, he is to be regarded in a light different from that in which he could be regarded, if he were altogether a pagan, and had no such relation to a Christian partner; and that, by the effect which her faith produces upon him, he is brought into such a state, that she may with propriety continue to live with him: their intercourse comes under a sanctifying influence by means of her piety. This interpretation, it is evident, gives the same general sense to ἡγιασται as to ἁγια—the last being applied to children, and denoting that they are, by their very birth, sepa-

rated from paganism, and brought into the nursery of the Christian church.

It will cast a still clearer light on the meaning of the text, to consider what was the occasion of the doubt which arose in the minds of the Corinthian converts, and which rendered the advice of the apostle necessary. This doubt unquestionably arose not from any thing which belonged to the original institution of marriage, but in consequence of the special law of God in relation to the Israelites, forbidding them to contract marriages with any of the idolatrous people around them,—a law which was intended, like many others, to preserve them a holy nation, separate from the rest of the world, till the coming of Christ. The doubt might be occasioned more directly by the instances in which such prohibited marriages had been dissolved by Divine direction, particularly in the time of Ezra. In opposition to the command of God, the people had formed marriages with the daughters of the surrounding nations; so that, as it was said, "the holy seed," that is, the Jews, had mingled themselves with those idolatrous people. After a time, they who had thus offended, were brought to consider the evil of what they had done; and they made a covenant with God to put away all the wives, and such as were born of them, according to the Divine command. See Ezra, chap. ix. x. Now, the apostle virtually told the Corinthian Christians, that that ancient national law was not binding upon *them*, any more than the law of circumcision; that those believers who were lawfully married to unbelievers had no occasion to dissolve the marriage bond. And he suggested to

them one consideration of great weight—namely, that if, according to the Mosaic law, and the example of the people in the time of Ezra, they were to put away their unbelieving partners, and so treat them as pagans—*ακαθαρτα*,* *unclean*, they must consider their children also as unclean, that is, heathen children, and put them away likewise, as the people did in the case referred to. In opposition to this, the apostle appeals to a fact which, as all pædobaptists believe, was well known—namely, that the offspring of such marriages were considered, as they are now, to be a *holy seed*—*ἁγια*, just as if both parents were believers, and so were fit to be devoted to God, to receive the seal of the covenant,† and enjoy other special privileges.

It will be seen, that in this extended examination of the passage before us, my chief reliance is upon well-known usage as to the word *ἁγιος*—that is, the prevailing sense of the word and its corresponding Hebrew קָדֹשׁ, among the Jews, especially when applied to Israelites, whether men or children, by way of distinction from other nations.

I have only one more remark. All pædobaptists believe, that the children of Christians, even those children who had only one believing parent, were, in the apostle's time, and in the Corinthian church, actually devoted to God in baptism, and so brought into a peculiar relation to the Christian church. Now, on this supposition, what could have been more natural, than for the apostle to

* Ακαθαρτους. [J. M.] † See Note A. [J. M.]

express this fact relative to the children, by saying, they were ἅγια, *holy*, that is set apart, consecrated to God, just as the children of God's people were formerly called *holy* on the same account.

The text, thus interpreted, presents a very satisfactory view of the subject under consideration, and shows how the apostles understood their commission. For we see, that wherever the Christian religion took effect, and men became believers, and formed themselves into a society, their children were considered as appertaining to the same society, and *as set apart*, and *devoted* to God, just as as they were under the former economy. And as they were thus considered to be ἅγια, a *holy seed, separated from paganism, and consecrated to God;* how can we reasonably doubt that they had the *sign** of consecration put upon them? Whitby states the argument from this text in favour of infant baptism, thus:—"If the *holy seed* among the Jews were to be circumcised, and be made federally holy by receiving the sign of the covenant, and being admitted into the number of God's people, because they were born in sanctity, or were seminally holy—*for the root being holy, so are the branches*,—then, by like reason, the *holy seed* of Christians ought to be admitted to baptism, the sign of the Christian covenant, and so to be entered into the society of the Christian church."† Whitby refers to Tertullian, de Anima, cap. 39, as having the substance of this argument.

* I would rather say, "the sign connected with their consecration." See Note B. [J. M.]

† See Note E. [J. M.]

LECTURE VI.

THE ARGUMENT RECAPITULATED.—THREE ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS.—PRECEPTS REQUIRING THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.—SILENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT RESPECTING INFANT BAPTISM.—AND THE FEELINGS OF PARENTS.—PROOF FROM ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY THAT INFANT BAPTISM WAS PRACTISED BY THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.

In order to give simplicity and unity to my reasoning on the subject of infant baptism, I have made it rest on the single inquiry, how the apostles must have understood the commission they received from Christ, *to proselyte and baptize all nations.* I have considered the point at issue, as relating altogether to the just interpretation of Scripture. And, as the passage which records the commission does not explicitly inform us whether *infant children* were meant to be included or not, I have thought it indispensable to consider what there was in the circumstances of the apostles, as *native Jews*, especially in their usages in respect to *children*, which would be likely to influence them in their understanding of such a commission from one who was born and educated in the same community with them. I have thought it important also to inquire, whether there was any thing in the previous instructions of Christ, or in the writings of the apostles afterwards, which could help

to show in what light they regarded little children. And here we have found, that Christ, exactly in accordance with the principle which was established by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, represented little children, as entitled to the privileges and blessings of his kingdom, and that the apostle Paul, as we understand him, represented it as a fact, generally known and acknowledged, that the children of believers were a *holy seed*, consecrated to God, and admitted to the privileges of the Christian community. And, if this was the case, we have supposed it would follow of course, that baptism, the sign of such consecration to God, and of such a relation to the church, was administered to them. Every consideration of this kind will be strengthened, and every such probable conclusion confirmed, by the proof which will by and bye be produced, that infant baptism was actually practised in the early Christian churches. This proof might, indeed, have been exhibited before any other consideration; and this method might have been attended with some special advantages. But it must be remembered, that, according to the belief of all pædobaptists, there were, in fact, considerations which influenced the apostles and early Christians to practise infant baptism. Now, what can be more natural than for us first of all to inquire, and, as far as we are able, to ascertain what those considerations were; and afterwards to present the evidence of the fact, that infant baptism was practised in the early Christian church? In this way we become satisfied, that the considerations which operated upon the minds of the apostles, actually

produced the effect which we have supposed. According to our views, *they* were the men who *began* infant baptism: of course they could not have been influenced in their judgment as we are, by the consideration of infant baptism as a practice already existing. *They* must have been influenced altogether by other considerations. The method which I have chosen is, first, to inquire into the circumstances and usages of the apostles, as members of the Jewish community, and to satisfy ourselves, as far as may be, what were the considerations which would naturally lead them to understand their commission *to proselyte* and *baptize*, as *including children;* next, to attend to any thing recorded in the New Testament, which has an obvious correspondence with the supposition, that infant baptism was practised by the apostles; and, finally, to exhibit the proof that baptism was, in fact, applied to children in the early Christian churches. This order appears best suited to present the whole subject in a clear light, and to make a just impression on the minds of Christians.

Before proceeding to the argument from ecclesiastical history, I shall advert to three additional considerations.

First.—*The manner in which the apostle requires children to be educated.* In Eph. vi. 4, Christian parents are required *to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* This is the general precept. Others more particular, but of the same import, might be cited. According to apostolic direction, the children of believers were, from their earliest years, to be instructed in the principles of the Christian religion.

They were to have the doctrines and precepts, the invitations and promises, the warnings and threats, of God's word clearly set before them, and earnestly inculcated upon them. They were to be considered and treated as scholars, placed in the school of Christ, and there to be brought under the influence of faithful instruction; so that, through the Divine blessing, their minds might be enlightened, and their affections and actions conformed to the principles of Christianity. In a word, their education was to be conducted with a single view to their being made followers of Christ, and active members of his spiritual kingdom. Now, the precepts of the New Testament, requiring all this instruction and discipline of children, perfectly agree with the view we have taken of their state. If God is pleased to place our children in such a near relation to us, and if he requires us to consecrate them to him, and to put upon them the sign of consecration, the mark of discipleship, that is, the mark of their being placed, as young disciples, in the school of Christ,—it becomes perfectly suitable, that he should require us to treat them with all this affection and care, and so to endeavour to bring them up for God. And it is true, not only that these precepts of the New Testament, pointing out the duty of parents, are perfectly *consistent* with the doctrine we maintain, but that they derive additional importance from this doctrine. If, according to Divine appointment, we publicly dedicate our children to God by a solemn religious rite, and thus bring them into a special relation to the church of Christ, and secure to them a prospect of special blessings, we

must surely feel that we are under very strong obligations to cherish a tender affection for them, and to labour, by all the methods of a wise Christian discipline, to make them what the privileges of their birth, and the commands of God require them to be. So the Divine precept given by Moses, that parents should teach their children diligently the things of religion, labouring to inculcate them, morning and evening and all hours of the day, became specially suitable, and acquired a special force, on account of their children having been publicly devoted to God, and marked as his, by circumcision.

These observations are not meant to imply, that those who do not devote their children to God by baptism, may not feel their obligation to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; but that those who practise infant baptism, will find themselves drawn to this duty by a *special* obligation, and will be likely to perceive, with additional clearness, and to feel with additional force, the propriety and importance of giving them a religious education. Now the circumstance, that infant baptism, considered as a Divine institution, has such an obvious and striking correspondence with those precepts which point out the duty of parents, and invests those precepts with new force, is a circumstance in favour of infant baptism. Whereas, if the contrary were fact, that is, if the doctrine of infant baptism were calculated to diminish, in our view, the importance of a religious education, or to render us less attentive to the duty; if, while holding to infant baptism, we felt a less powerful motive, than we otherwise should,

to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; this certainly would be a consideration of no small weight against it. Because it is the manifest design of all the positive institutions of religion, to have an effect upon our minds in favour of its moral precepts, and to excite us, by stronger motives, to the performance of our duty.

The second consideration referred to, is, the silence of the New Testament respecting the subject of infant baptism. This circumstance has already been noticed in another connexion. But I wish to dwell upon it more particularly here, as I think it must appear on the whole, to be an argument in favour of our doctrine.

I can by no means admit, as I intimated in a previous lecture, that the New Testament does not contain any thing which has a bearing upon infant baptism; nor can I admit that it does not contain that which fairly implies it. But it is evident that infant baptism is not introduced as a subject of particular discussion in the New Testament; that it is neither explicitly enjoined nor prohibited; and that neither the practice of baptizing children, nor the absence of such a practice, is expressly mentioned.

I. The fact, that infant baptism is not expressly enjoined as a duty, that the principle involved in it is not particularly discussed, and that the practice is not expressly mentioned, is no argument against infant baptism.

It is manifest that this general fact cannot be urged as an argument against infant baptism, because, as circumstances were, there was no occa-

sion to enjoin it, and no occasion to discuss the subject, or even to mention it. These circumstances have already been brought into view. The Jews had always been accustomed to have their children consecrated to God by the same rite, as was appointed originally for Abraham, the father of the faithful, and his seed, and afterwards for all men from among the Gentiles, who should become proselytes to the true religion. They had always been accustomed to see children treated as a holy seed, and members of the society of God's people. They had never heard the propriety of this questioned, and had never been acquainted with a contrary practice. In these circumstances, it was, I apprehend, a matter of course, that they should understand the Divine appointment of baptism for Christian proselytes, as including their children. And it being a matter of course that they should so understand the subject, there was not the least necessity, that the baptism of children should be expressly required, or even mentioned.

To be perfectly satisfied on this subject, just look at the manner in which circumcision is spoken of, Acts xv. 1. Certain Judaizing Christians came from Judea to Antioch, and said to the brethren there, "Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Why did they not express all that they meant, and say, "Except ye and *your children* be circumcised, ye cannot be saved?" And afterwards, ver. 10, when Peter spoke in opposition to the Judaizing Christians in regard to the same subject, and said, "Why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples," —that is, Why do ye require the disciples to be

circumcised?—why did he not in so many words object to laying this burdensome rite upon the disciples and their children? The answer to both questions is the same. There was no occasion for the mention of children, because it was perfectly understood by all, that children were to be included with their parents. It had always been so. And who could need to be informed, that it was to be so still? The same, I think, must have been the case, when baptism was appointed, instead of circumcision, as the mark to be put upon the people of God. The apostles and Jewish Christians had always been accustomed to consider children, as united with their parents, as members of the same religious community, and as entitled to the same mark of consecration to God. They would understand that this practice of applying the sign* of consecration to children, as well as parents, would be continued, under the Christian dispensation, because the reasons for it continued, it being founded on a natural and unchangeable relation; and because nothing was said or done by the author of the new dispensation, implying that there was to be any alteration in this respect. So that it cannot be regarded as any thing strange, that children are not expressly mentioned in the command to baptize, or in the accounts of baptisms contained in the New Testament. Nor is it strange that no express declaration on this subject is found in the writings of the early Christian fathers; as, according to our belief, the practice had never been objected to, and had never

* See Note B. [J. M.]

occasioned any controversy. This silence of the Scriptures and of the early fathers, respecting the baptism of children, is analogous to the fact, that the circumcision of children on the eighth day is scarcely mentioned for a thousand years before Christ. Now, as we can satisfactorily account for the fact, that the New Testament contains no express mention of infant baptism, on the supposition that infant baptism was admitted and practised by all Christians without any controversy, this fact cannot surely be considered as affording a valid argument against infant baptism.

But, II.—I think it can be shown that the silence which we find in the New Testament in the other respects mentioned—that is, the fact that there is no command prohibiting the practice of infant baptism, and that there are no such remarks as would naturally arise from the *absence* of the practice, is an important argument in favour of infant baptism. As it had always been the custom of God's people, from the time of Abraham, to consecrate their children to God, to put upon them the seal of the covenant, and to admit them as belonging to their holy community, if Christ had intended to make any alteration as to the manner in which they were to be regarded and treated, we should suppose that he would have mentioned such alteration; and that when he commanded his apostles to proselyte and baptize all nations, he would have expressly informed them, that, under the new dispensation, children were not meant to be included.

But there is another view of greater consequence still. All the Jews, those who embraced Chris-

tianity, and those who rejected it, had always been accustomed to consider their children as a holy seed, consecrated to God, and to see them receive the seal of God's covenant.* Now if Christianity had cut them off from this relation to God, and had deprived them of the sign † of being consecrated to him, and had treated them as having no part or lot with God's people; can we think that such a change as this could have been made without occasioning some animadversion? Can it be that neither the friends nor the enemies of Christ would have made any complaint? The unbelieving Jews, and even some who professed to believe, were ready enough, on all occasions, to complain of innovation, and of every thing in Christianity which implied the giving up of what belonged to the Jewish religion. How earnestly, for instance, did they object to giving up circumcision, although baptism was introduced in its place, as a mark of discipleship? But, in consequence of the ardent affection which, as men, especially as Israelites, they cherished for their offspring, they must have felt a much stronger objection to depriving them wholly of the privilege of being consecrated to God by any religious rite, and to excluding them wholly from that sacred relation which they had always sustained to the church of God, than to a change merely in the rite. But, with all their disposition to complain, what complaints did they ever make of Christ, or the apostles, for treating children with less regard, than had been exercised towards them before? There is no

* See Note A. [J. M.] † See Note B. [J. M.]

the least appearance of there having ever been any complaint, or any controversy on this subject, in the time of Christ or his apostles, or in the period succeeding. Now I cannot but regard this, as utterly unaccountable, on the supposition that baptism, the initiatory sign appointed by Christ for his disciples, had been withheld from their children. Of all the subjects of complaint, this must have been first among those Jews who rejected Christianity, and even among those who embraced it. And as there is no trace of any such complaint, and no command or intimation respecting children, which could have occasioned such a complaint; in a word, as there is perfect silence among the writers of the New Testament, and of the early Fathers, respecting any change in the standing, or privileges of children; we must conclude that no change took place, and that they were regarded and treated by the teachers of Christianity, as they had been by the people of God before.

We come now to the third consideration referred to—namely, the feelings of pious parents.

My position is, that infant baptism, when apprehended correctly, must be agreeable to the best feelings of pious parents respecting their infant offspring. This is not produced as an independent argument. But after having attended to the principal reasons which support the doctrine of infant baptism, it surely must be a gratification to find, that the doctrine corresponds with our purest and best affections. It would, on the contrary, be a serious difficulty in our way, and would lead us, after all, to question the soundness of our arguments, if the most tender and pious dis-

positions of our hearts were found in array against the practice for which we plead. The laws and institutions of religion are all intended to exercise and improve our benevolent and pious affections. And when we perceive in them an obvious fitness to do this, we cannot but consider it an argument in their favour. How common is it, for example, to illustrate and enforce the obligation of men to pray, and to attend on the Lord's supper, from the consideration, that these duties perfectly agree with our most devout feelings, and are suited to improve them! Indeed, how often do we satisfy ourselves that it is our duty to perform certain things, not expressly enjoined by the word of God, because we are drawn to them by those affections which we consider to be right! But if we find that any practice stands in opposition not only to our natural affections, but to the feelings of benevolence, we are wholly disinclined to believe that it could ever have been appointed by God. With these things in view, we come to the subject now before us. And let me ask what pious parent rightly apprehending the nature and design of infant baptism, would not acknowledge it to be a benevolent appointment of God? Who would not be gratified to find such a doctrine as that of infant baptism true? Who would not deem it a privilege to be permitted to perform such a duty? And who would not regard it as a subject of heartfelt grief to be deprived of such a privilege? It must surely be the wish of pious parents to give up their children to God, and to do this in the temple of God, where the prayers of many will ascend with their own to the Lord of heaven and earth, in behalf of their

children. Publicly to apply to them a sacred rite, which marks them for God; which signifies that they are placed in the school of Christ, and in the nursery of the church,—that they are to enjoy faithful parental instruction, the preaching of the gospel, and the affections and prayers of Christians; which signifies too, that they are to come under the influence of a Divine economy, fraught with the most gracious promises, and the most precious blessings;—to apply to children a sacred rite of such import, must be inexpressibly delightful to godly parents. If, then, such parents give up infant baptism, they give up a privilege, which I should think they would regard as of more value to their children than all the riches in the world. Now I cannot but deplore a mistake, which leads parents to act against those sincere and devout affections, which God requires them to cherish, and which religion, with all its observances, is designed to improve. Pious parents, I repeat it, who rightly apprehend the doctrine of infant baptism, cannot but wish it true. And it would seem to me that their first inquiry must be, whether they may be permitted thus to devote their dear offspring to God, and to apply to them the seal of his gracious covenant.* If nothing is found to forbid their doing this; especially, if they have reason, from the word and providence of God, to believe that he would approve it, I should suppose they would embrace such a privilege with the sincerest gratitude and joy, and hasten to confer such a blessing upon their children. That it is a privilege and a

* See Note A. [J. M.]

blessing, will be made still more evident, by the remarks I shall offer in another place, on the utility of infant baptism.

I now proceed to the argument in favour of infant baptism from *ecclesiastical history.*

The testimony of ecclesiastical history on this subject is just such as we should expect, on the supposition that infant baptism, was from the beginning, universally regarded as a Christian institution. In this respect, the same remarks as have been made on the manner in which the subject is treated in the New Testament, will apply generally to the early Christian fathers. They had little or no occasion to enter on a particular discussion of the subject, or even to make any express mention of it. Accordingly, we find in the writers who next succeeded the apostles, only allusions to infant baptism. These allusions, however, are of such a nature as to afford satisfactory evidence that it was *the uniform practice.* But the fathers, who wrote in the following ages, were more and more particular and explicit in their testimony.

My intention is only to make citations sufficient to show the nature of the argument, referring you to Wall's History of Infant Baptism, and other works, where the subject is treated at full length.

My first citation is from Justin Martyr, who was born near the close of the first century, and who wrote his Apology, from which the citation is made, near the middle of the second century. Among those who were members of the church, he says, "there were many of both sexes, some sixty, and some seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ from their infancy." The word

he uses is, εμαθητευθησαν, *they were proselyted*, or *made disciples*,—the very word which Christ had used in his commission to his apostles: "Go ye and make disciples of all nations,"—μαθητευσατε. The persons referred to, Justin says, "were made disciples εκ παιδων, from their *early childhood*." The word is applied to the little children whom Christ took in his arms and blessed. It is evident, therefore, that Justin understood the command of Christ, to make disciples and baptize, as applicable to little children; and he wrote only about one hundred years after Matthew, who records that command.

Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, was also born near the close of the first century. He says—"Christ came to save all persons, who by him are born again unto God, (renascuntur in Deum,)—infants and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder persons." Wall and Schroeckh, and other writers of the first ability, have satisfactorily shown, that the word *renasci*, in the writings of Irenæus and Justin, signifies *baptism*. In this argument, we are not concerned at all with the opinions entertained by Irenæus, as to the *efficacy* of baptism; our only inquiry is, whether it appears from his writings, that infant baptism was the prevailing practice. The passage above cited contains satisfactory proof of this, as it fairly admits of no construction which can lead to any other conclusion.

Tertullian, who was born about the same time with Irenæus, entertained some singular notions in regard to baptism, and argued in favour of delaying it in the case of little children. But it is

manifest, that what he said on this subject was in opposition to common use, and in favour of introducing a new practice,—just as much as his argument for delaying baptism, in regard to those who are unmarried, and in regard to widows. But his opinion and his argument, in favour of such delay, had no influence: the practice of the church had been, and continued to be entirely against it.

The testimony of Origen is very explicit:—"The church received a tradition, or order, from the apostles, to give baptism to little children also,"—"etiam *parvulis* dare baptismum." The reason which he gave for this was, that all were contaminated with sin, and needed to be cleansed by water and the Spirit. In other places, he speaks expressly of the usage of the church *to baptize infants.*

This testimony of Origen is of great weight. For, in the first place, he was born before the close of the second century; in the next place, he was descended from Christian parents, and, being a man of more information than any one of his time, must have had a particular acquaintance with the Christian church in the different countries where it was established; in the third place, these testimonies are so plain and explicit, as to need no addition or explanation, and to admit of no doubt. And they not only show that infant baptism was generally known and practised, but represent it as having been ordered by the apostles.

In the time of Cyprian, the question was agitated, whether baptism should be administered to children on the second day after their birth, or whether, in allusion to circumcision, it should be postponed

till the eighth day. This question was referred to a council of bishops in Africa; but not a single bishop in Africa was in favour of delaying the baptism of infants; and Cyprian himself, who was very partial to Tertullian's views, never made the least reference to him, as one who rejected infant baptism.

Augustine, who was born in the middle of the fourth century, says—"The whole church practises infant baptism: it was not instituted by councils, but was always in use." He adds, that he does not remember ever to have heard of any person, whether Catholic or heretic, who maintained that baptism should be denied to infants.

I shall close these citations with the testimony of Pelagius. He found it difficult to reconcile his views respecting the native character of man with infant baptism. Under the pressure of this difficulty, he would have been very ready to assail the custom, had he been able. He was indeed charged with denying infant baptism, but he directly and indignantly pronounced the charge to be false; and though he was so strongly tempted to do it, he never expressed the least doubt that the practice of baptizing children was of apostolic authority. On the contrary, he declared, that he never heard of any one, even the most impious heretic, who asserted that infants are not to be baptized. Pelagius was born in Great Britain, and travelled through France, Italy, and Africa, to Jerusalem. Had there been any church, or any respectable individuals, who denied infant baptism, it is altogether improbable that he would have been ignorant of it; but he declares, that the practice of

infant baptism prevailed universally, and always had prevailed.

Thus it appears, that we have evidence as abundant, and specific, and certain, as history affords of almost any fact, that infant baptism universally prevailed from the days of the apostles through four centuries. During this period, no one denied it, and no one argued against it. Tertullian, indeed, pleaded for the delay of infant baptism, but never questioned its being of Divine authority. And there is no evidence that the least controversy ever existed in any of the churches, respecting the propriety of applying baptism to children, or the authority they had from Christ to do it.

On the value of this argument from early ecclesiastical history, I shall offer a few remarks.

It must be allowed by all, that those Christian writers who have, in different ways, given testimony to the prevalence of infant baptism in the early ages of Christianity, were honest and impartial men, and that we have reason to confide in their veracity. It must be allowed, too, that they were under the best advantages to know whether the practice of infant baptism commenced in the time of the apostles. On this subject they were not liable to mistake, and so their testimony is entitled to full credit.

Infant baptism was a subject in which early Christians must have felt a very lively interest. It was a thing of the most public nature, and a mistake concerning it must have been altogether improbable—I might say, impossible. It was certainly impossible that Christians should be mistaken, as to the question whether infant baptism

was generally practised in their own age; and it must have been almost as impossible for them to be mistaken, as to the practice of the preceding age: for they had memories, as well as we; and they had oral traditions; and they had written records also; and why should not they have known what took place in the time of their fathers, as well as we know what took place in the time of our fathers? But surely we have no doubt whether *we* were baptized in our infancy, or whether our parents were baptized in their infancy, or whether, in the days of our fathers, it was the uniform practice of the churches with which we are connected, to give baptism to children. Who can imagine that we are in any danger of mistake as to the practice of the first churches of New England, relative to their infant offspring? If any one should take upon him to deny that those churches baptized their children, should we not think him extremely ignorant, or in sport? We think it sufficient that our fathers have told us it was so, and that we never heard any one question it. But besides this, there are many circumstances which plainly imply it, and we have books written at the time, which contain indubitable evidence of the fact. And we say, too, that the very existence of the practice at the present time, considering how public and how important a thing it is, must be regarded as conclusive evidence that it was the practice before, unless it can be made to appear that a change has taken place, and that our churches have been induced to renounce their former views, and to become pædobaptists. If such a change has taken place, nothing can be

easier than to make it appear; and it must belong to any one who asserts such a change, to produce the evidence of it. If no evidence of this can be produced, we feel it just to conclude that no change has taken place, and that the present practice is only a continuation of that which formerly prevailed.

These remarks are all applicable to the subject under consideration. My position is, that the fathers, from whom I have made citations relative to the practice of infant baptism, were upright men, and were under the best advantages to know whether the practice had prevailed from the days of the apostles; and accordingly, that their testimony on the subject is entitled to full credit. One and another of them, in different circumstances, and in different countries, stand forth as witnesses that infant baptism had been the uniform practice of the Christian church from the beginning. Although they lived at different periods, they were all near enough to the time of the apostles, to obtain correct information respecting a practice like this. In their own time the practice was universal; they tell us it had been so from the beginning. Some of them would have been quite ready to deny this, if they could have found any reasons for doing so; but they unite in declaring that the practice had been universal in the Christian church from the time of the apostles.

Should any one say, that there might have been a change, and that the baptism of infants might have been introduced either gradually or suddenly, I would ask, where is the evidence of this? Even if all who lived at the time, had been united in

such a change, it could not have taken place without leaving some clear proof of the fact—some traces which would have been visible to those who succeeded. But it is in the highest degree improbable that all who lived at the time of such a change would be united; and if they were not united, there must be some evidence of the disunion—some traces of the controversy of disagreeing parties—some account of the remonstrances of the more conscientious and faithful, against those who were unstable, and who wished to make unwarrantable changes,—and of the arguments of such innovators to justify themselves against the charge of corrupting the simplicity of a Christian institution. But where is the evidence of the change supposed? Where do we find any traces of it? What declaration, or suggestion, or allusion is there in any written history, or in any tradition, making it certain, or in the slightest degree probable, that such a change ever took place? Who ever heard of the contention of parties on this subject—of the remonstrances of the faithful, or the apologies of innovators? Now, if the early Christians had among them any of the vigilance and zeal of those who, in modern times, have denied infant baptism—could the baptism of infants have been introduced without exciting dissatisfaction, complaint, and opposition? Take the Baptist churches now existing, and distinguished for their piety and zeal, in Great Britain, in America, or in India,—should any of these churches attempt to introduce infant baptism, do you not think that a loud voice would speedily be raised against them? Would

they not be obliged to encounter arguments too many, and opposition too decided, to be either despised or forgotten? Now turn to the primitive churches. If they did not consider infant baptism a Divine institution, why did they not lift up their voice and array their arguments against it, when first brought into use? We have very ancient and particular accounts of controversies and heresies on a great variety of subjects, both doctrinal and practical; how happens it that we have no account of the heresy of the pædobaptists, and no account of any controversy with them? If we may judge from what has appeared in modern times, we should think that there are few subjects more likely to excite attention, than this; and few subjects on which the disagreements of Christians would be more likely to be attended with warmth, or more likely to be remembered.

These remarks are sufficient to show the value of the argument from ecclesiastical history. The testimony of the early Christian writers, in favour of infant baptism, as the uniform practice of the church, is worthy of entire credit; and, as the circumstances were, affords a conclusive argument that it was a Divine institution. And I am very confident, that an argument like this on the opposite side, would be quite as much relied upon by those who deny infant baptism, as this is relied upon by us. If they could but make it appear, by citations from the best ecclesiastical histories, that the churches, immediately after the time of the apostles, were united *in rejecting* infant baptism, and that this continued to be the case for more than a thousand years, without the exception of a

single church or individual Christian, who pleaded for the practice,—would they not earnestly seize this fact, and confidently rely upon it, as a mighty and unanswerable argument against infant baptism? I would seriously propose this view of the subject to the candid and impartial consideration of those who differ from us on the question at issue. Let them remember how much, and with what zeal, writers on their side have laboured to show, that infant baptism was *not* the universal practice of the early Christian churches; and how much stress they have laid on the least shadow of evidence that primitive Christians, in any instances, did *not* baptize their children. Now, if the evidence they are able to produce, in regard to those single instances, really amounted to clear, indisputable proof,—especially, if they could make it appear that Christians in general were not accustomed to baptize children,—if they could produce one plain declaration, or even a suggestion or hint, from Origen, from Augustine, or from Pelagius, showing that infant baptism was not practised by the first Christian churches, and that no order or tradition in favour of it was ever received from the apostles,—would they not consider this as an unquestionable proof against infant baptism? and would not their confidence in such a conclusion rise to the very highest pitch, if they could make it appear that when infant baptism was first introduced, earnest and repeated remonstrances were made against it, as a dangerous innovation? But as the proof from ecclesiastical history is wholly on the other side, and shows clearly that infant baptism was the uniform practice of the church in

the ages succeeding the apostles—is it not the part of candour that they should acknowledge this to be a valid argument in favour of infant baptism?

If there should be any remaining doubt in your minds, as to the propriety of relying on the testimony of uninspired men on such a subject as this, and if you should think that nothing but an express declaration from the word of God ought to satisfy us, I would turn your attention for a few moments to the consequences of adhering to this principle. For, in the first place, what evidence have you, except the testimony of uninspired men, that the several books which constitute the Old Testament, as we now have it, are the very books to which Christ and the apostles referred, as the word of God? Neither of them has given us any specific instruction on this point; and we go to Josephus, who was no inspired man, and no Christian; and we go to the Talmud, and to Jerome, Origen, Aquila, and other uninspired men, to find a list of the books which we are to receive as given by inspiration of God; and having proved from their testimony that these were the books which Christ and the apostles regarded as sacred writings, we prove in other ways, that those writings have come down to us without any material alteration. And we must use the same kind of reasoning in regard to the New Testament. We have no voice from heaven, and no express testimony of any inspired writer, that the several books, which compose the entire canon of the New Testament, were given by inspiration of God, or that they were all written by apostles, or even by Christians. But we go to Eusebius and other uninspired writers,

and we find that they regarded these books as the genuine productions of those to whom they are commonly ascribed, and as having Divine authority. It is on such evidence as this that we rely for the support of those sacred books which are the basis of our faith, and which teach us what are the doctrines, and precepts, and rites of our religion. And why may we not as safely rely on their testimony in regard to the manner in which a religious rite was understood and applied by the churches in the first ages of Christianity? Why may we not confide in them, as credible witnesses of a fact concerning which they had the best opportunity to obtain correct knowledge?

LECTURE VII.

BAPTISM A SUBSTITUTE FOR CIRCUMCISION.—SEAL OF THE COVENANT.—DIFFICULTY ARISING FROM THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FORMER AND THE PRESENT ECONOMY, AND FROM THE REQUISITION OF FAITH.—IMPORT OF INFANT BAPTISM.—UTILITY.—STANDING OF BAPTISED CHILDREN.—DUTIES OF PARENTS AND THE CHURCH.

I HAVE now exhibited, as far as my present object requires, the arguments which I regard as most weighty and conclusive, in favour of the position that the apostles understood their commission to proselyte and baptize as including children. There are, however, several remaining topics more or less related to the subject, which must be carefully considered; and when thus considered, they will afford important collateral evidence in support of infant baptism, and will have a very satisfactory influence upon the minds of candid inquirers after the truth.

The first of these remaining topics is, *baptism considered as a substitute for circumcision.*

It is common to speak of one thing as coming in the place of another, when there is a general agreement between them, as to the object sought, or the end to be answered, how different soever they may be in other respects. Thus our meeting-houses or churches are sometimes spoken of as

coming in the place of the Jewish temple and synagogues, because they agree in this, that they are designed for public worship and public religious instruction; as to the form of the buildings, and the particular mode of worship and instruction, they differ greatly. We also consider ministers of the gospel as coming in the place of the Levitical priesthood; the more spiritual services of Christians in the place of the daily sacrifices of the Jews; and the Lord's Supper in place of the Passover. In each of these cases there is an obvious agreement, in regard to the general object sought, between the former institution and that which comes in its stead. So in civil matters. A law formerly existed requiring a thief to be punished by scourging; but that law has been set aside, and another enacted, requiring a thief to labour in prison, with solitary confinement at night. Now we speak of this law, or this mode of punishment, as a substitute for the other, because it relates to the same subject, and is intended to answer the same general purpose. In the same manner, we speak of the punishment of death as commuted for exile, or of exile as substituted for death.

From these and other like examples, we learn how such language is commonly used. And it must be considered proper to use it in the same sense, in relation to the subject before us. The position which has been maintained by the ablest writers, and which I shall endeavour to defend, is, that *baptism comes in the place of circumcision.* This position is not founded so much on any particular text, as on the general representations of

Scripture, and the nature of the case. When God adopted Abraham and his posterity to be his peculiar people, he commanded them to be circumcised; and it appears from the representations of Moses and Paul, that those who received this rite, were under special obligations to be holy. Circumcision was, then, a sign put upon Abraham and his seed, showing them to be a *peculiar people*, under peculiar obligations to God, and entitled to peculiar blessings. Just so baptism is a sign, put upon the people of God under the new dispensation, signifying *substantially* the same obligations and blessings, as those which were signified by circumcision;—the same, I say, *substantially*, though in some circumstances different. If, then, circumcision was a rite, by which persons were admitted into the society of God's people, and set apart for his service, under the former dispensation; and if circumcision is set aside, and baptism is the appointed rite, by which persons are admitted into the society of God's people and consecrated to his service, under the new dispensation—it is evident that baptism has succeeded in the place of circumcision. We cannot but be satisfied with this conclusion, if the design of one of these rites was, in all important respects, the same as of the other; and particularly, if they were both appointed, as a seal of the same general promise of God to his people, and of the same general relation of his people to him.

Now if baptism comes in the place of circumcision, and is, in all important respects, designed for the same purpose,—what is the natural inference respecting the extent of its application? Plainly this—that it is to be applied as extensively

at least, as circumcision was. Under the former dispensation, if any who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were made proselytes to the Jewish religion, they were circumcised. Accordingly, if, under the present dispensation, any who have been enemies to the spirit of Christianity, are converted and made disciples of Christ, they are to be baptized. This conclusion, which we should naturally adopt from the circumstance that baptism was substituted in the place of circumcision, perfectly agrees with the particular instruction we have in the New Testament. The command to be baptized related primarily to those who became proselytes to Christ, whether they were Jews or Gentiles; it related to believers: these were to be baptized, just as adult proselytes to Judaism had before been circumcised. And what is the natural conclusion respecting the children of believers? It is plainly this, that as the children of Abraham, the father of believers, and the children of all proselytes to the true religion, were formerly circumcised—so the children of all believers are now to be baptized. This must be our conclusion, unless the word of God expressly forbids infant baptism, or unless there is something in the nature and design of baptism, which makes it manifestly unsuitable to apply it to infant children.

The fact that circumcision was applied only to *men*, is of no consequence as to the argument; because women in that case, as in many others, were evidently considered as represented by men, and virtually included with them. Consequently, the meaning of infant circumcision must have been

perfectly the same, as though it had been applied to persons of both sexes. But the distinction formerly made between male and female, is done away under the Christian dispensation; the seal of the covenant is now to be applied to believers of both sexes, and of course to all their children, whether sons or daughters.

The reasoning above stated, by which infant baptism is inferred from infant circumcision, I once thought inconclusive; but the fact that it is relied upon by all the ablest and most candid defenders of infant baptism, induced me carefully to re-examine it. This re-examination has brought me to the conclusion, that the appointment and uniform practice of infant circumcision, in connexion with the reasons on which it rested, and the circumstances attending it, would naturally lead the apostles, and must lead us to understand the rite of baptism as coming in the place of circumcision, and as meant to be applied to infant children. The reasoning which appertains to this subject will be brought into view more fully in another place. I might make citations from a multitude of the most respectable authors, containing statements of this argument in different forms; but I shall content myself with referring to Calvin's Institutes, book iv. ch. 16; Dwight's Discourses on Infant Baptism; Storr's Bib. Theol. book iv. § 112, together with ill. 4th of the same section; and Knapp's Theology, § 142, 2.

Second.—Meaning of the phrase, *seal of the covenant.**

* See Note A. [J. M.]

If we would ever arrive at clear and satisfactory views on this subject, we must dismiss all indistinct and obscure conceptions, and come directly to the Scriptures, to learn, by diligent inquiry, in what sense the word "covenant" is there used.

The Greek διαθηκη, like the corresponding Hebrew בְּרִית, signifies, in general, *any arrangement, constitution, establishment, economy, or plan of proceeding.* Schleusner says, "notat dispositionem, qualiscunque ea sit;" and generally, "omne quod cum summa certitudine et fide factum est." The use of the word in the Septuagint he represents to be the same: "Omne, quod certum et constitutum est,"—"Whatever is appointed and made sure;" an established constitution or plan. It is from this general sense that all the particular senses are evidently derived. Thus διαθηκη, *appointment, plan, establishment,* is sometimes a *will* or *testament,* sometimes a *promise,* sometimes a *precept,* sometimes a *compact,* and sometimes an *economy,* or *method of acting.* The word signifies one or another of these, just as circumstances require. Thus, in Heb. ix. 16, 17, διαθηκη must evidently mean a testament or will, as the passage could have no consistent meaning without giving this sense to the word. The writer says, "a testament, διαθηκη, is of force after men are dead, and that it is of no force while the testator liveth." Here the word signifies, the arrangement or disposition which a man directs to be made of his affairs after his decease. In Luke i. 72, the word denotes the Divine promise. Zacharias celebrates the faithfulness of God, in "remembering his holy covenant, the oath that

he sware to Abraham," referring to the promise of a Saviour. Here διαθηκη signifies that Divine arrangement, plan, or appointment, respecting a Saviour, which was made known in the way of a promise to Abraham. In Gen. ix. 9—18, God speaks of making a covenant with man, and with the whole animal creation, and with the earth too; and represents this covenant as between him and them. Many persons understand such a phrase to denote a proper agreement or contract, in which two parties unite, and in the execution of which both parties have an agency. But this cannot be the meaning of the phrase in the present case; for the irrational part of the creation were incapable of having any agency either in forming or executing such an agreement. The thing promised was, that the earth should not be again destroyed by a deluge. This was God's covenant; and it was said to be between God and all the inhabitants of the earth, rational and irrational, because the thing which God determined and promised, related to them,—they were all to be preserved from being destroyed by another deluge. So that what is here called "God's covenant," was in reality his determination and promise as to the manner in which he would treat man, and beast, and the earth. The earth and its inhabitants were in no sense a party to this Divine covenant or arrangement, except as they were to be benefited by it—that is, were to be preserved from another deluge. This establishment, or declared purpose of God, had a *seal.* "God said, I will set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and the earth." The rain-

bow was appointed to be a sign of the truth of God's promise—a pledge of the certain execution of the purpose he had declared, that he would not again destroy the earth by a flood.

From this case we learn, that a covenant of God may have respect to those who are incapable of having any agency either in agreeing to it, or in carrying it into execution. It may respect the animal creation, day and night, and the earth itself; and if so, it may surely have respect to infant children. And this is no more than saying, that God may have a determination, or settled purpose, as to the manner in which he will treat infant children; and that he may make known such a determination by his word. To such a determination, or settled plan of conduct, the Scriptures give the name of "covenant."

In some passages, διαθηκη signifies a *command.* Acts vii. 8, "God gave him the covenant of circumcision;" that is, as Schleusner understands it, "gave him a command to circumcise." I apprehend, however, that the word has a broader meaning here, and denotes the whole economy which God established in regard to Abraham and his seed, including precepts, promises, and privileges; of which economy circumcision was the sign. And if so, the word in this place has nearly the same sense as it appears to have in Gal. iv. 24, where the phrase "two covenants,"—δυο διαθηκαι, clearly means the Mosaic and the Christian economy. So in Heb. ix. 15, "the first covenant" doubtless means the Mosaic dispensation; and in ver. 20, "the blood of the covenant" is the blood by which that Divine economy was confirmed.

In the same way we must understand the words of Christ, when he instituted the Supper—"This cup is the New Testament in my blood." This cup of wine represents my blood, by which the new dispensation, or the Christian covenant, is confirmed.

There is hardly any passage in the Bible, where covenant directly and properly means a compact, or agreement between two parties. But in various instances it may imply this, or something like this, by necessary consequence. For when the word διαθηκη, signifying a Divine appointment, precept, or promise, has respect to moral agents, there must be an obligation on their part to accede to such appointment, precept, or promise, and to act according to it; but when the Divine covenant—that is, the Divine appointment or constitution, has respect to things not possessed of moral agency, it cannot imply that they are under any obligation to conform to it, or that they are in any way parties in the covenant, except merely that it has a relation to them. The word covenant, therefore, considered as the translation of διαθηκη, and of the corresponding Hebrew בְּרִית, no more signifies an actual agreement between two parties, than the word economy, law, or appointment.

We see then, that the Scripture sense of the word διαθηκη, *covenant*, is materially different from the meaning of covenant in common discourse, where it denotes a mutual agreement. It is of special importance to note this, because the supposition that the word, as used in the common version of the Bible, has its common signification, must encumber the subject before us with needless difficulties. For if διαθηκη, *covenant*, is understood

to mean an agreement between two parties in relation to the interests of religion—then there must be two parties *capable* of such agreement, capable of engaging in a mutual religious transaction. God must be one of the parties, and the other must be intelligent, moral agents, capable of acting in religious concerns. Of course, *infant children* must be excluded. Whereas if we duly consider the nature of a *covenant* in the Scripture sense, we shall see, that it may just as well relate to *infant children*, as to *adults*. For surely God may have a *determination*, may make a *promise*, may settle an *economy*, or *plan of proceeding*, in regard to children, as well as in regard to men. And such a determination, promise, or economy, being a matter of great consequence, may, with the utmost propriety, be marked by a religious rite; and a religious rite, thus introduced, may very justly be considered a *seal*, or *confirmation*, of God's gracious economy. The obvious use of such a seal is, to keep in lively remembrance the Divine determination and promise; to impress the minds of parents with the obligations it imposes on them; and in due time to be a remembrancer to the children, of the privileges which the God of their fathers has granted them, and of the gracious economy under which they are placed; and in this way, to produce in their minds a becoming sense of their peculiar obligations, as the children of pious parents. These remarks are sufficient to show, generally, the suitableness of applying the appointed seal of the Divine covenant to children, as well as to parents. Both parents and children have an interest in the covenant, and its seal has

an obvious and important significancy, whether applied to the former or to the latter.

The Scriptures teach us, that God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed—that is, that he made known what was his purpose respecting them; that he declared how he would treat them. But what was this purpose of God? What was to be his economy, or the course of his administration, towards Abraham and his seed? The Scriptures furnish the answer. God said, "Thou shalt be a father of many nations. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give to thee and to thy seed after thee, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I *will be their God.*" Such was the determination which God made known—the economy which he had established. This economy involved essential conditions on the part of Abraham and his seed; and these conditions, declared in one way and another, were, briefly, that they should walk before God, and be upright and obedient. But the circumstance, that a Divine promise or plan of proceeding is conditional, may not diminish its importance, nor render it any the less proper that it should be marked by a religious rite.

Still more specific views of the nature and extent of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed, may be derived from other declarations of Scripture, and from that conduct of God's providence, which is, in this case, and in others, the best interpreter of his word. I shall refer only

to one text—Rom. ix. 4. Here, in a very summary way, the apostle mentions the peculiar privileges of the Israelites, and says, that to them belonged "the adoption, and the glory, and the *covenants*, and the giving of the law, and the service of God." This agrees with the representations, elsewhere made, of the peculiar favours which God bestowed upon that people. He adopted them as his children. He gave them a holy law, written on tables of stone, and a great variety of other precepts, moral and ceremonial, suited to their condition. He raised up prophets to teach and warn them. He displayed his glory in the midst of them; made great and precious promises to them, and from time to time, wrought wonders of power and mercy in their behalf. Thus the children of Israel were a highly favoured people; and the place where they dwelt, was a highly favoured place. Those who were born there from generation to generation, were born in propitious circumstances; they inherited special privileges. It was the pleasure of God, that they should all be placed under the operation of a gracious economy; should be taught by pious parents, and by consecrated men; should, from their earliest years, hear what God had done for their fathers, and what a holy law he had given them; and should come under those Divine influences, which, if cherished, would impart to the various privileges they enjoyed, a saving efficacy. This was God's establishment respecting Abraham and his seed. This was his chosen method of transmitting the true religion from one generation to another; of continuing a church in the world,

and of training up his people for heaven. It was a system of *religious education.* The children of God's people were to be considered, from their birth, as consecrated to him; and, as soon as they were capable, were to have the doctrines and precepts of his word inculcated upon them, accompanied with the pious example and the prayers of parents, and all encouraged and followed by the promised blessing of God. Children born under that gracious economy, were thus, by their very birth, brought into a state highly auspicious to their present and eternal welfare. The token of God's covenant—that is, circumcision, was a token of all this kindness on his part, and of all these privileges, prospects, and obligations on the part of parents and children.

Now the Divine economy under the reign of Christ, is, in all important respects, the same as it was formerly. Children have the same relation to their pious parents, and that relation is of equal importance in the concerns of religion. It is as much the constitution of God, as it was formerly, that religion shall be preserved in the world, and transmitted from one generation to another, through the influence of a pious education. The children of Christian parents are born into a state as favourable, at least, as the children of Israelitish parents were—I might say, much more favourable. It is as much the will of God, as it was formerly, that they should be piously consecrated to him, and that they should enjoy a religious education, including all the proper forms of instruction and discipline, and all the accompanying influence of a good example, and of prayer. And it is as much

the appointment of God now, as it ever was, that his blessing shall attend this mode of educating children; and that in this way generally, persons shall be brought into the kingdom of Christ. This is the plan of the Divine conduct now, as much as it ever was. So that in regard to the great interests of man, the children of believers are now brought, by their birth, into a state similar to that of the children of God's people in former times. The only important difference is, that God's establishment, διαθηκη, is more merciful now—is fraught with higher blessings, than formerly. So that there are all the reasons, which formerly existed, and some in addition, for applying to the children of pious parents a religious rite, which is the appointed token of that gracious economy under which they are placed.

Thus, when we consider what God's covenant or plan of conduct respecting children was formerly, and what it is under the reign of Christ, we cannot but conclude that it is as reasonable and proper to apply to them the *present* seal of the covenant, as it was the *former*. And this view of the subject is at least sufficient to expose the futility of any conceivable presumption against infant baptism, and to show that the presumptive arguments are decidedly in its favour.

The common difficulty which meets us in regard to this reasoning, is, *that the transition from the former economy to the latter implied a great change; and that, as the Christian economy is so widely different from that which preceded, we cannot reason from the one to the other.*

I readily admit, that a very great change took

place, when the people of God passed from the Mosaic to the Christian economy,—a change from obscurity to noon-day light; from a state in which the Saviour was set forth in promises and symbols, to a state in which he was presented in all his glory, as actually come, and fully invested with the office of the prophet, priest, and king of the church,—a change, too, respecting the place and mode of worship, the power of the motives which enforce the obligations of religion, and the extent to which the blessings of salvation were to be diffused. But whatever was the nature of the change, and to whatever objects it related, it certainly did not imply any diminution of privileges to *children;* and, of course, it could have no influence to prevent the application to them of the seal of the new economy. So far as the change which took place affected any particular subject, we cannot indeed infer what is proper respecting that subject, since the change took place, from what was proper before. The change, for example, affected the subject of sacrifices, and the line of separation between Jews and Gentiles; accordingly, it would be absurd for us to argue that whereas sacrifices were offered, and a separation between Jews and Gentiles made under the former economy, the same must be continued now. But, in many respects, it is perfectly proper to reason from one economy to the other. Christ and the apostles did reason from one to the other; and it would be easy to produce various instances in which this must be acknowledged by all to be perfectly proper. If, for example, it was the duty of men under the former dispensation, to worship

God, and if the worship required comprehended confession, thanksgiving, and supplication; and if it was their duty to love their neighbours as themselves—the same must be the case now. But why? Because the change which took place, had no respect to these subjects; *these duties rested on principles common to both dispensations.* Just so it is with the duty of consecrating children to God by a religious rite. This duty rested on the natural and immutable relation between parents and children, and on the general purpose and promise of God to propagate religion and perpetuate the church, by sanctifying the seed of believers. This was the Divine economy formerly, and it is so now. It has as much influence now, as it formerly had: its importance is above all conception, involving as it does, the religious character and the eternal destinies of men. Now the same token of this gracious economy, and of consecration to God, was formerly applied to *parents* and to *children*, and was thus applied for reasons which are common to all ages. It is plain, therefore, that the difference existing between the two dispensations cannot in any way affect the subject before us, and that it is as suitable to apply the token of the Christian economy to children, as it formerly was thus to apply the token of the Abrahamic economy.

This course of reasoning, which is only auxiliary to the main argument, was introduced for the particular purpose of removing the difficulties which have frequently been felt in regard to infant baptism, on account of the change from one dispensation to another. This change, which is admitted to have been great and extensive, could

not affect the propriety of consecrating children to God by a religious rite, for the plain reason that it did not affect the principle on which such consecration rested. Though it affected the form of the rite, it did not affect the propriety of applying it to children; because the Christian economy, of which baptism is the seal, as properly relates to children, as that economy of which circumcision was the seal. Consequently, no reason against infant baptism can arise from the difference between the Christian and the Abrahamic economy.

The requisition of faith, in order to baptism, may be thought to be a proof that the application of baptism was meant to be more limited than that of circumcision. But before admitting this, we ought carefully to examine the subject.

Of *whom*, then, was faith required in order to baptism? Of those, evidently, who were capable of understanding the nature of the requisition. The command to believe could relate to no other. This was so perfectly obvious, that no teacher of Christianity could have any occasion to mention it. This command, or any other command, coming from a just God, must be understood as relating to those only who were capable of complying with it. So that the fact, stated exactly, was this,—those who were capable of believing—that is, adult persons, were required to believe, in order to be baptized. A requisition not unlike this, was made under the former dispensation. Adult persons, in order to be admitted by circumcision into the society of God's people, were required to renounce idolatry, to believe in the God of Abraham, and to submit to the institutions and laws

which he gave by Moses. Such faith as this, under the Mosaic economy, answered to the faith which is required under the Christian economy. The requisition of faith, then, in order to baptism, has nothing new in it but this, that the faith required is to be adapted to the circumstances of the Christian dispensation; whereas the faith required before was to be adapted to the Mosaic dispensation. Thus, in regard to adult persons, the case is very similar under both dispensations. How, then, can the fact that Christ required adult persons to believe, in order to be baptized, prove that baptism was to be more limited in its application than circumcision?

But it is said, that the circumcision of children was *expressly commanded*, and that, without this command, no one could have inferred from the institution of circumcision for *adults*, that *children* were to be circumcised. I grant, that an express command was necessary at first, to authorize the application of the seal of the covenant to children. And if baptism had been the first seal, such a command would have been necessary in relation to this. But the principle having been once established, *that the seal of the covenant is to be applied to children*, there is no occasion for the repetition of a Divine command to justify an adherence to that principle. In respect to circumcision, an express command was necessary; because circumcision was the first rite which was appointed to be the seal of God's covenant. Had *baptism* been the first seal, and had *infant* baptism been settled by Divine command, as infant circumcision was—and had the practice of God's people

been for ages conformed to it—and had circumcision been then introduced in the place of baptism, as the seal of the Christian covenant—it appears evident that no new command would have been necessary to authorize the circumcision of infants. But, on the other hand, if so great a change was to be made, as the *withholding* of the seal of the covenant from the seed of believers, such a change would surely require a new Divine command to authorize it.

If any one still thinks, that Christ's requiring men to believe and be baptized, implies that infants are not to be baptized, because they cannot believe, I would ask him, whether the same mode of interpreting Scripture would not debar infants from salvation? "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned," is the grand principle of the New Testament. Faith is required in order to salvation as much, certainly, as in order to *baptism*. And this requisition furnishes as much reason for excluding infants from salvation as for excluding them from baptism. But all Christians are united in holding, that the requisition of faith in order to salvation, cannot be applied to children; and to be consistent, they must hold, that the requisition of faith in order to *baptism* cannot be applied to children; the requisition most evidently has as much to do with salvation, as with *baptism*. The two cases, then, are alike. Christ requires men to believe, in order to be saved; but when he requires this, he does not say, that *infants* are excluded from *salvation*, because they cannot believe. So he requires faith in order to *baptism;* but he does not say, that infants are

excluded from baptism, because they cannot believe. Thus, so far as the requisition of faith is concerned, there is no more propriety in excluding infants from baptism, than in excluding them from salvation. Now if we admit that, notwithstanding this requisition of faith, infants may be saved, we must admit, also, that they may be baptized. The requisition of faith, which is intended only for adults, proves nothing one way or the other, as to children. The question of their being baptized, or saved, must be determined on other grounds. We ask not whether they believe—for this they cannot do; but, whether there are other reasons for baptizing them, and other reasons for thinking they may be saved.

The same principle may be satisfactorily illustrated by 2 Thess. iii. 10. The apostle says, "This we commanded, that if any one would not work, neither should he eat." But who ever understood this command as relating to children, and as implying, that they were to be kept from eating, because they did not work?

The command to believe and be baptized, which has now been considered, is the most plausible argument ever advanced against infant baptism; and, if I mistake not, our opponents rely upon it more than upon any other. But they ought well to consider, that the mode of reasoning which they adopt, would exclude all infants from salvation; and they certainly have good reason to pause, before they admit the conclusiveness of an argument which would lead to such fearful consequences.

Having thus endeavoured to show that there is no valid proof, that the application of baptism was meant to be more limited than that of circumcision,

I must take the liberty to say, there is in one respect, clear and incontrovertible proof, that it was meant to be applied more extensively. By common consent, baptism is to be applied to females, though circumcision was not. This fact suggests the following inquiries:—Who can see any reason why the seal of the covenant should be applied to females now, more than formerly, except this, that the Christian economy has a spirit of more expansive benevolence, and was intended to diffuse its privileges to a greater extent, than the former economy? And if the Christian economy really possesses this character, as it undoubtedly does—and if from this expansiveness of its spirit, and this enlargement of its privileges, it has, in one important case, applied its distinguishing seal more extensively than the former economy did—who can suppose, that in another case, without any apparent reason whatever, it would apply the same seal less extensively? What but an express Divine command, or a well known example of inspired men, could satisfy us of this?

Third.—*Import of infant baptism.**

This may be understood from the preceding discussion. Circumcision was the seal of God's covenant with Abraham and his offspring—that is, of his gracious design and promise respecting them. This design and promise was, in brief, that he would be their God. Circumcision signified, that such was the promise of God—such the plan of administration he had fixed upon towards Abraham and his seed; and it manifestly implied, that there

* See Note A, and Note p. 54. [J. M.]

were obligations on their part, to love, worship, and obey him who promised to be their God. Thus it was a seal of God's promise to them, and of their obligations to him; but it was never intended to signify, that all, to whom it was applied, were actually at the time intelligent worshippers and servants of God; in regard to infant children, this was impossible. But the rite did signify, that in process of time, they would be under high obligations to worship and serve God, and that he would pursue a course of conduct towards them, which would be suited to influence them to this. As to those who had attained to mature understanding, and were voluntary in receiving the rite of circumcision, it signified their readiness to accept the good promised, and to perform the duties required. In them it was an indication of right feeling—a profession of piety. But it became so, not as the direct and necessary import of the rite, but from their voluntary agency in its application. So far as circumcision was concerned, this view of the subject must be admitted by all to be correct; and why not in regard to baptism? The Divine economy, though circumstantially different, is the same in substance now, as before the coming of Christ—the same, most evidently, so far as relates to the connexion between parents and children, and the high interests which that connexion involves. When this Christian rite is applied to believers, it is a seal of the new dispensation towards them; and it signifies their consent to this economy, their belief of its truths, and their readiness to receive its blessings, and comply with its obligations. But it comes to signify this, and

so to be a profession of piety, not as the direct and necessary import of baptism, but from the fact, that it is applied to those who have a voluntary agency in receiving it. Its general import, as a token of God's gracious economy, is as consistent with its being applied to children as to men. Its particular import varies with the state and circumstances of those to whom it is applied.

Baptism by water may always be considered as signifying, that those to whom it is applied, are the subjects of moral pollution, and need that spiritual cleansing, or purification from sin, which is effected by the Holy Spirit, through the blood of Christ. When adult believers receive baptism themselves, they hereby express their belief, that they are by nature polluted with sin, and must be sanctified by the Spirit of God, in order to be admitted into heaven; and they express their desire for such sanctification, and their determination to seek after it, in the diligent use of all appointed means. When we present our infant children for baptism, we express our belief, that they are the subjects of moral pollution, and must be born of the Spirit in order to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven; and we express our earnest desire that they may experience this spiritual renovation, and our solemn determination to seek after it by fervent prayer to God, and by faithful attention to all the duties of Christian parents. This seems to me a perfectly natural and satisfactory view of what is signified by the baptism of children. The use of water in this Christian rite is indeed a token of *spiritual cleansing*—not however as a thing actually accomplished, but as a thing which is

absolutely necessary. Whether we are concerned in the baptism of children, as ministers of the gospel or as members of the church, we do, by this public token, express our belief, that spiritual purification is indispensably necessary for the children who are baptized, and our determination to do whatever belongs to us, severally, for the accomplishment of that important end. And it is of great consequence to the interests of religion, that this obvious import of infant baptism should be often set forth, and that the obligations of parents and churches should be often explained and inculcated, especially at the time of the baptism.

Fourth.—*The utility of infant baptism.*

The utility of positive institutions consists, generally, in the moral influence they exert upon us—in their adaptedness to promote good affections, and to excite us to the diligent performance of duty. Now there is no institution of religion, which is more evidently suited to have a salutary influence than this. When we consecrate a child to God in baptism, we have our eyes turned directly to that glorious Being, to whom we and our offspring belong, and we are made to feel the perfect reasonableness of such a consecration. We look to God's holy and merciful economy, of which baptism is the appointed token, and are impressed with the Divine condescension and goodness manifested in it, and the invaluable blessings resulting from it. The transaction is public, and on this account is likely to excite in us a more constant recollection of the sacred obligations which bind us as parents, and greater diligence in performing the duties we owe to our children.

For the truth of these remarks, I make my appeal to thousands of pious parents. They well know how their hearts have been affected with the love of God, and the interests of the soul, while they have been engaged in consecrating their children to God in baptism; how earnestly they have longed and prayed for their salvation; what resolutions they have made to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and how sensible the effect of this transaction has been upon them afterwards. The view they have taken of God's gracious promises and administration, proves a mighty encouragement to earnest endeavours and prayers for the good of their children. If, for a time, their endeavours and prayers seem to have little or no effect—still they are not disheartened. They look upon their children, as having been placed under that gracious economy, in which God says to them, *I will be your God, and the God of your seed.* They remember with what glorious success he has crowned the persevering endeavours of pious parents, and how frequently he has done this, after many years have passed away in sorrowful disappointment. Their confidence in the merciful covenant of God, which has been sealed to them and their children by the sacred rite of baptism, bears them above discouragement, and inspires a hope of the salvation of their offspring, which nothing is able to destroy. Now it is evident, that all the effect which this public and sacred rite produces upon pious parents—this deep impression of their obligations—this excitement of their good affections, their faithful endeavours, and their fervent, persevering prayers,

turn directly to the benefit of their children. We are not to look at the mere baptism of a little child, and to confine our thoughts to the act itself, or to the present effect of it upon the child. We must view this transaction in all its relations and consequences. We must consider, that the child is a rational, immortal being, just entered on his probationary state—that his eternal happiness depends on the formation of a virtuous and holy character—and that his character depends, in a great measure, on the circumstances in which he is placed, and the moral causes which act upon him, in the first periods of his existence. We must then consider that the child, who is baptized in a manner correspondent with the spirit of the institution, is, at the very commencement of his being, brought into circumstances highly auspicious—that he is placed under a Divine economy, which secures to him the affections and prayers of parents and other Christians, and which distils upon childhood and youth the dews of Divine grace. He is placed in a school, where he is to receive faithful instruction and discipline, and to be trained up for the service of Christ. The child, who is offered up in baptism by devout parents and a devout church, is placed in these circumstances, and is entitled to these privileges; the substance of which is, a faithful Christian education, accompanied with the Divine blessing. All this is signified by baptism. The design of the transaction evidently is, to produce a moral effect upon parents and children,—upon parents *directly*, and upon children as a *consequence*.

It would avail little to say, in the way of

objection, that parents would be under all these obligations, and would have sufficient motives to faithfulness, without such an ordinance as baptism. The obvious design of baptism, is, to cause these obligations to be felt more deeply and constantly, and to give greater efficacy to these motives. The influence of public rites and observances has been acknowledged in all ages, both in civil and religious concerns. In our own country, and in other countries, they are kept up, in order to perpetuate the principles of civil government. Among the Israelites, they were established for the purpose of giving to one generation after another, a knowledge and a lively impression of the principles and laws of their religion. The human mind is so constituted, that it is very doubtful whether the truths of religion could be inculcated and impressed with the necessary efficacy, without the help of public rites and observances. The utility of the Lord's Supper, which is generally acknowledged to be great, rests on the very same principle as that which gives importance to infant baptism. Thus it was, also, with the utility of the passover and circumcision. And we may as well say, that the principles of religion might have been effectually taught, and impressed, and transmitted from one generation to another, among the posterity of Abraham, without the passover or circumcision, or any of their sacred rites; and that the principles of the Christian religion might be effectually taught and impressed, and its motives rendered sufficiently powerful, without the Lord's Supper;—we might say this with just as much propriety as that the influence of such a rite as

infant baptism is unnecessary, and that parents will be as likely to feel their obligations and attend to their duties without it, as with it. The experience of the whole world is in favour of visible signs and tokens—of public rites and observances. The human mind requires them, as means of inculcating moral and religious truth. To undervalue them would be a discredit to our understanding, and to neglect them, an injury to our moral feelings.

But suffer me here to say, that the utility of infant baptism cannot be measured by the influence which it has actually exerted upon the generality of Christians: for what sacred institution, and what Divine truth, has not fallen short of the influence which it ought to have upon the conduct of men? The question is, what effect is infant baptism *designed* and *adapted* to produce? What has been its influence upon those parents whose minds have been in the best state—whose parental affection has been most highly sanctified, and whose piety most active? And what will be its influence, when the great body of Christians shall come to be fully awake to the interests of religion, and shall make it the constant object of their solicitude, and labours, and prayers, that their offspring, from one generation to another, may become children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven? The value of this sacred rite, taken in connexion with the Divine economy, of which it is the sign, and with the obligations of parents and churches, which it is intended to enforce, cannot be perfectly known, before the present low state of religious feeling among Christians shall

give place to a more elevated piety, and to more constant and more faithful exertion to promote the welfare of the rising generation. In my apprehension, it is chiefly to be attributed to the unfaithfulness of parents and churches, and their failing to act according to the spirit of this Divine ordinance, that it has so far fallen into disrepute, and that any can feel themselves justified in saying, "it is of no use."

There is still another way, in which children may experience the salutary effect of baptism. When they come to adult years, they may be induced to attend to the duties of religion, by means of the baptism which they received in infancy. When a child of ours becomes capable of being influenced by rational considerations, we may address him in such a manner as this:—"In your infancy, we devoted you to the service of your Creator and Redeemer; and we put upon you the mark of that gracious economy under which you were placed by your birth. In that transaction, we bound ourselves to bring you up for God, and to seek diligently your eternal happiness. As you are now come to years of understanding, you are bound to devote yourself to God, and by your own act to confirm what your parents did for you in your infancy." The child may be taught, that there is nothing so reasonable, nothing so conducive to his highest interest, as for him to choose the God of his parents for his God. It may be inculcated upon him, that by neglecting his soul, and living in sin, he will be guilty of casting contempt on the pious solicitude, the exertions and prayers of his parents,—on the

sacred ordinance by which he was consecrated to the service of Christ, and on all the obligations laid upon him, and all the privileges secured to him, by such an early consecration. If a youth who was devoted to God by baptism in infancy, possesses even an ordinary degree of moral sensibility, considerations like these must produce a powerful effect upon him, and, through the Divine blessing may prove the means of his salvation.

The view which I have taken of this subject is, you perceive, very different from that which was entertained by many of the early Christian fathers. They attributed to baptism itself a mysterious inherent efficacy. They supposed that it directly conveyed grace and salvation to the soul, and that without it no one could be saved. But I have represented the utility and efficacy of infant baptism as consisting primarily in the influence it has upon the feelings and conduct of parents; and then, secondarily, in the effect which parental instruction, example, and prayer, produce upon children. This effect I have considered as resulting from God's gracious economy—that is, his appointment and promise; and I have referred, and always would refer to facts which occur in the course of Divine providence, as proof of the correctness of these representations. These facts are striking and momentous, and deserve to be contemplated again and again with the liveliest interest. Behold the mighty influence of parental character and instruction! How is it that Pagan idolatry, Jewish infidelity, and the violent superstition of Mohammed are continued in the world, and transmitted from one generation to another?

What is it which leads us to expect, that according to the common course of events, the children of pagans will be pagans, and that the children of Mahometans will be Mahometans, and the children of Jews, Jews? It is the general principle established by God himself, that the character of children is formed by parental influence; and is not this as true in regard to Christians, as in regard to any other class of men? In ordinary cases, the children of faithful Christian parents will be Christians; and they will become so by means of the influence which their parents exert upon them, in their early education. Such is the Divine economy; that children are placed under it is signified by baptism; and the application of baptism to children is a suitable expression of the piety of parents, and of their love to the souls of their offspring; and is a powerful means of exciting them to recollect and feel their obligations, and to be active and persevering in the performance of parental duties. And let me add, that when the piety and diligence of parents shall rise to a proper height, and they shall address themselves to the duties which they owe to their children, with united zeal and prayer, the true import of infant baptism will be more fully understood, and its utility acknowledged with more fervent gratitude to God.

Fifth.—Relation of baptized children to the church.*

This relation of children to the church the most respectable authors generally represent as infant membership; and I can see no valid objections

* See Note C. [J. M.]

against this, if the language is understood with suitable qualifications. Baptized children may, in a very important, though a qualified sense, be considered as infant members of the Christian church,—just as formerly the infant children of the priests were infant members of the priesthood, and as now, all children that are born here are considered as infant members of our civil community, entitled to enjoy, as they may be capable, the benefits of society, and in due time to become complete and active members. But whatever may be the language which we choose to employ, it is perfectly clear that baptized children must be considered as bearing a real and very endearing relation to the church; and although they are not at present capable of being members in the full sense in which adult believers are—they are, even now, capable of enjoying some of the benefits resulting from their condition as children of the church, and they will be more and more capable of enjoying these benefits, as they advance in age; and at length, unless their own wickedness shall prevent, they will become active, faithful Christians. Such is the design of the economy under which they are placed; such is the end of their being consecrated to God, and placed in the school of the church; and we may hope that, through Divine mercy, this will ordinarily be the happy result.

Sixth.—Duties of parents and the church towards baptized children.

On this subject, which is of the highest practical importance, my remarks must be very summary.

The general duty of parents, and of the church,

is the same—namely, such a course of pious instruction and discipline, such an example of holiness, and such fervent prayer, both in public and private, as are suited to promote the salvation of the rising age, and to transmit the Christian religion, with all its institutions and blessings, to future generations. This duty belongs primarily to parents; in every thing which is important to their children, they are to take the lead; but their pious efforts are to be encouraged and sustained by the whole body of Christians with whom they are associated. These are all under obligation to cherish a lively interest in the children of the church, and with unwearied diligence to labour for their good, always looking to God for those spiritual blessings which result from his gracious covenant.

It is impossible for me, in this place, to give a particular enumeration of the methods which ought to be pursued, by parents and by the church, for the welfare of children. I shall only say, that our benevolent efforts are to be made in various ways, and to be continued so long as there is any hope of success; and I know not why we should abandon such a hope while the life of our children continues.

On the question whether the church ever ought, by a public act, to cut off those who give evidence of obstinate impiety, there have been various opinions. That view of the subject which I have found the most satisfactory, is briefly as follows. The church is to join with parents in administering instruction, admonition, and warning, to children and youth, in the most discreet, affectionate,

and faithful manner; and to do this perseveringly. In judging of the reasons which ought to encourage us to exertion, we are not to attend chiefly to present appearances; but are to consider the forbearance and long-suffering of God, and the multiplied instances in which his grace has visited those who have long lived in sin, and who, in human apprehension, had been fitted for destruction. When those who have been devoted to God in baptism, wander far and long from the path of duty, and show fearful symptoms of obduracy, we are not quickly to despair of their salvation, but are to follow them with every effort which the sincerest love can dictate; and when no other effort seems to promise any good, we are to abound in prayer, relying on the infinite grace of God, and earnestly hoping that our prayers will prevail, and that our children will at length be persuaded to consider their ways, and turn to the Lord.

It is, in my view, utterly inexpedient to attempt to fix upon any particular age at which those who were baptized in infancy, and who exhibit no evidence of piety, are to be abandoned by the church, as those for whom no farther efforts ought to be made. For suppose you fix upon the age of eighteen, or twenty, or twenty-one,—who can be sure that a youth at that age, though without any evidence of regeneration, may not be in a state of mind which is more susceptible of good impressions, and which affords more hope of salvation, than at any period of his life before? Now, if any person should be in this state, and the church should adopt a principle like what I have referred

to, they must forthwith exclude such a person from all the advantages of their Christian friendship, and they must do this at the very time when those advantages would be most highly prized. How directly would such a principle oppose all the feelings of Christian benevolence and compassion! and what havock would it make of the interests of the soul!

To conclude. The day of Zion's glory draws near; and when that happy day arrives, a clearer light will shine upon the minds of God's people, as to the principles and rites of Christianity. The duties of parents to their children will be more correctly understood, and more diligently and successfully performed. Division and strife will cease, and those who love the Lord Jesus Christ will be of one mind. The shortest and best way, therefore, to solve our doubts, and settle our differences, is to labour unitedly and earnestly to hasten the arrival of that blessed day when a brighter sun will arise upon the church, and quickly chase away all the shades of night. Then Christians, having a more perfect illumination, and being united in judgment and feeling, will more justly prize the blessings of the Christian economy, and will combine their prayers and efforts to transmit those blessings from one generation to another, and to promote the increasing and perpetual prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.*

* See Note D. [J. M.]

NOTES BY THE EDITOR.

NOTE A. Page 28.

I DO not entirely approve of the phraseology of our author when he says, that "circumcision was first appointed to be the seal, not of the Mosaic economy, but of this spiritual and immutable covenant of God with Abraham." The apostle, in Rom. iv. 11, represents circumcision as "a sign"—namely, of great spiritual blessings; and circumcision was undoubtedly, not only to Abraham, but also to all the Jews, a sign of great spiritual blessings. The principal blessings, indeed, which distinguished the Jews as a natio , were unquestionably spiritual. In that same passage, the apostle represents circumcision as also "a seal;" and he tells us of what it was "a seal." It was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." "A seal," metaphorically understood, means "an attestation." Now, when circumcision is said to have been to Abraham, "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised," it is not meant, that it was an attestation to him of his faith; but it was an attestation to him of that "righteousness," which was the object of the faith which he had, while yet uncircumcised. Now that "righteousness" was a righteousness which was imputed to him without any works of his own, Rom. iv. 6; it was a

righteousness provided by God—"the righteousness of God, witnessed by the law and the prophets," Rom. iii. 21; it was, in short, the "everlasting righteousness," which was to be brought in by the Messiah, Dan. ix. 24; and which is "unto all," and "upon all them that believe," Rom. iii. 22. Of this righteousness, circumcision was to Abraham, and to all circumcised persons, "a seal." It was an attestation on the part of God of the reality of that righteousness. It assured the circumcised person that the righteousness would be brought in, and brought in for him. It did so, in other words, it was "a seal of the righteousness of God," because it was "a sign" of the purifying influences of the Spirit, which *presuppose* the finished righteousness of Jesus, and which are vouchsafed in consideration of that righteousness. Circumcision then, like baptism, was *a seal* of "the righteousness of God," or of the work of Christ; because it was *a sign* of the work of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is based upon the work of Christ; and, therefore, the ordinance which faithfully represents in emblem, the work of the Spirit, is a seal or attestation of the reality of the work of Christ. It is true, then, that circumcision was "a seal;" but it is not in Scripture, called a seal *of any covenant*, far less is it called "*the* seal of the covenant." To represent it, then, as "the seal," either of the Mosaic, or of the Abrahamic covenant, seems to me to be inaccurate; and, therefore, instead of saying with our author, that it "was first appointed to be the seal, not of the Mosaic economy, but," &c.—I would say, that it "was first appointed to be a sign of pure and purifying blessings, and a seal of the righteousness of God, not in connexion with the Mosaic economy, but in connexion with this spiritual and immutable covenant with Abraham."

NOTE B. Page 50.

Baptism does not appear to me to be quite accurately represented by our author, as "the sign of consecration" on the part of the parent. It is the sign of the purifying influences of the Spirit of God, provided by God, for the person baptized. Compare Acts ii. 17, with Acts ii. 39. It is thus the sign of blessings *bestowed by God.* The submission on the part of the parent, to the reception of baptism, or, the presentation of his child to be baptized, is, not "the sign," but "*the mode* of consecration" which has been appointed under the Christian dispensation.

NOTE C. Page 56.

I have never yet been able to see that *the Christian church*, and *the kingdom of heaven (on earth)*, are precisely identical phrases. I think that they differ in this respect, that *the kingdom of heaven*, like ALL OTHER KINGDOMS, includes the children of the subjects, while the church is the society of the subjects themselves. Hence I do not regard baptism as introducing the baptized person into the church.

NOTE D. Page 155.

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting a passage from the preface of JOHN GOODWIN's great work—"Redemption Redeemed." In the context, he is showing the calamities to which a man is exposed who is wedded to any error. One of these calamities is this—the errorist "makes himself a debtor to own and maintain, upon occasion, the whole tribe and family of errors, whereof this is a member, or

else he must represent himself as a man inconsistent with himself, and prevaricating with his own principles." To illustrate this remark, he makes an incidental reference to the error of anti-pædobaptism. He says, "As, for example, he that is entangled with the error of those who deny the lawfulness of infant baptism, stands obliged, through his engagement to this one error, to maintain and make good these, and many the like erroneous and anti-evangelical opinions.

"1. That God was more gracious to infants under the law, than now he is under the gospel; or which is every whit as hard a saying as this, that his vouchsafement of circumcision unto them, under the law, was no argument or sign at all of any grace or favour from him unto them. 2. That God more regarded and made more liberal provision for the comfort and satisfaction of typical believers, though formal and express unbelievers, in and about the spiritual condition of their children, under the law, than he does for the truest, soundest, and greatest believers, under the gospel; or, which is of a like notorious import, that the ordinance of God for the circumcising of infants under the law, was of no accommodation or concernment for the comfort of the parents, touching the spiritual condition of their children. 3. That the children of true believers under the gospel, are more unworthy, more unmeet, less capable subjects of baptism, than the children of the Jews were of circumcision under the law; or, which is of like uncouth notion, that God accepted the persons of the children of the Jews, though unbelievers, and rejects the persons of the children of believers under the gospel, from the same or the like grace, these being under no greater guilt or demerit than those other. 4. That baptism succeedeth not in the place, office, or service of circumcision. 5. That when the ini-

tiatory sacrament was more grievous and burthensome, in the letter of it, God ordered the application of it unto children; but after he made a change of it for that which is more gracious, and much more accommodate to the tenderness and weakness of children, as baptism clearly is, in respect of circumcision, he hath wholly excluded children from it. 6. That it was better and more edifying to men under the law, to receive the pledge of God's fatherly love and care over them, whilst they were yet children; and that it is worse, or less edifying to men, to receive it at the same time, and better and more edifying unto them to receive it afterwards, as, viz.—when they come to years of discretion. 7. That men are wiser, and more providential than God, as, viz.—in debarring or keeping children from baptism for fear of such and such inconveniences, whereas God by NO LAW, OR PROHIBITION OF HIS, interposeth against their baptizing, nor yet insisteth upon, or mentioneth, the least inconvenience any ways likely to come upon either the persons of the children themselves, nor upon the churches of Christ, hereby. 8. And, lastly, (to pass by many other tenets and opinions, every whit as exorbitant from the truth, and as untenable as these, which yet must be maintained by those who suffer their judgments to be encumbered with the error of anti-pædobaptism, unless they will say and unsay, deny in the consequent, what they affirm and grant in the antecedent), and that which is more than what hath been said yet;—they must, upon the account of their enthralment under the said error, maintain many uncouth, harsh, irrational, venturous and daring interpretations and expositions of many texts and passages of Scripture, and particularly of these—Gen. xvii. 7; 1 Cor. vii. 14; Acts ii. 39, and xvi. 15; 1 Cor. i. 16, and x. 2; besides many others, which frequently upon occasion are

argued in way of defence and proof of the lawfulness of infant baptism. Now as the Greek epigram maketh it the highway to beggary, to have many bodies to feed and many houses to build; so may it truly enough be said, that for a professor of Christianity to have many errors to maintain, and many rotten opinions to build up, is the next way to bring him to a morsel of bread, not only in his name and reputation among intelligent men, but also in the goodness of his heart and conscience before God. Nor is it of much more desirable an interpretation, for such a man to appear distracted in his principles, or divided in himself."—GOODWIN'S *Redemption Redeemed*, pages 11, 12.

I request the candid inquirer to consider this extract, and if he can then intelligently fall into anti-pædobaptism, I cannot but marvel.

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